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THE WATER FLOWS

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Filling Out Water Sample Forms

With the Health Department no longer accepting water samples it is especially important that water samples collected from the water system have correct and complete information on the water sample report.

Failure to correctly complete the slip can result in the samples results not being reported to Department of Health Database and credit not being given for the sample.

The following information is very important to include on a coliform bacteria sample slip:

- Water System ID Number
- Water System Name
- Collection Date & Time sample was collected
- Type of Sample (Routine or Repeat)
- System Type (Group B)
- Sample Location (address)

Water Samples required for Group B water systems are as follows:

Bacteria—Annually Nitrate—Every Three Years

Health Department Will No Longer Provide Water Sample Testing

Due to budgetary constraints the Cowlitz County Health Department will no longer have water sample testing available through our office. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you. Enclosed is a list of accredited labs in the area along with their contact information.

For a more complete list of certified drinking water laboratories, please see the Department of Ecology website at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/labs/search.html>

Group B Rule Revision

The Group B Rule Revision process is still ongoing though is being delayed due to state budget cuts with a new expected effective date at the end of 2012. The current draft rules are available on the Washington State Department of Health website at:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/groupb.htm>

This is a brief summary of draft rule changes, more details can be found at the website listed above:

- Added intent of rules is to focus on design and construction of systems
- Added language about local boards of health adopting local rules
- Added section that 2 or less connection systems are exempt from rules except for certain regulated facilities and if the local board of health adopts rules for 2 or less connection systems
- Added some language altering what type of new systems require an engineer to design the system
- Added multiple requirements for development of new water systems including source requirements, water quality requirements, design standards
- Lowers the arsenic maximum contaminant level from 50ppb to 10ppb for new systems or existing unap-

proved systems (previously approved systems would be grandfathered)

- Removes ongoing monitoring requirements unless local rules are adopted by the local board of health.
- Existing system approval section has been altered to have the following requirements
 - Source needs to meet well construction standards (WAC 173-160)
 - No source of contamination in the sanitary control area that could cause a public health risk
 - Meets all water quality standards (including the new arsenic standard at 10ppb)
 - Capable of meeting 20psi throughout distribution system during peak demands
- Customer notification time reduced to 24 hours for when a e. coli positive sample or other acute threat or incident has occurred.

Please note the rules are still being revised and are subject to change based on feedback they have received from community forums or written comments.



Financial Viability

Financial viability is the ability to obtain sufficient funds to develop, construct, operate, maintain, and manage a public water system, in full compliance with local, state, and federal requirements on a continuous basis. In short, that means you should run your water system like a business.

Water systems should manage their finances to ensure they have enough funds for future needs as well as daily ones. However, many small water systems in Washington are struggling with aging and failing infrastructure because their owners and operators did not run them like businesses. When you have enough money, you are better able to ensure safe and reliable drinking water now and in the future.

Five steps can be taken for financial viability.

1. **Develop An Operating Budget** - Develop a six year operating budget. Don't forget to factor inflation in when determining future costs, reserves for repairs. The Rural Community Assistance Corporation has free financial viability software on its website <http://www.rcac.org/doc.aspx?163>
2. **Take a Look at Your Rates** - Rates should be set based on the operating budget, below is more info about rates.
3. **Create and Fund an Operating Reserve** - An operating cash reserve is extra money set aside to handle problems with cash flow
4. **Create and Fund an Emergency Reserve** - This reserve would be used to respond to events such as floods, earthquakes or vandalism
5. **Create and Fund Reserves for Capital Improvement & Equipment Replacement** - Having a reserve to fund replacing pressure tanks, pumps, etc. Try to estimate in advance how long certain pieces of equipment are likely to last.

The information in this article is obtained from the DOH handout Financial Viability for Small Water Systems. The full document can be found at the DOH website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/default.htm>

Water Rates

(Article is a copy of a DOH Handout titled Water Rates)

How do water rates reflect the cost of water?

Ideally, water rates pay for all the costs of providing water from operating the water system and maintaining the facilities to replacing equipment and adding new facilities in the future. Just like an automobile, a water system starts wearing out the day it is turned on. Water systems should price water to reflect the true cost of providing safe and reliable drinking water to customers now and in the future. Accurate pricing will also help avoid large rate increases in the future. Customers pay a portion of the cost of water service through the bills they receive from their water system. Other special charges like hook-up fees or development charges also assist in meeting revenue needs. Rates should be fair to customers so that each customer pays their share. Water systems can also use rates to promote water use efficiency.

What do water rates cover?

It is essential for a water system to set rates so that they recover the full cost of producing and distributing water to customers. Revenues, including what customers pay for water, should meet or exceed the expenses generated by a water system. Excess revenue is saved for future improvements and unexpected emergencies. Expenses may include:

Water quality monitoring costs	Electricity and other utilities	Planning and engineering	Insurance and bonds
Chemicals and supplies	Improvements and upgrades	Office supplies	Salaries and benefits
Maintenance and repairs	Debt payments	Professional services fees	Operating and emergency re-

Why are regular reviews of budget and rates important?

It is critical that water systems ensure their revenues cover the true cost of doing business. When rates aren't increased periodically as expenses go up, water systems may need to raise rates dramatically to guarantee they can meet their needs. A significant rate hike is more difficult for customers to afford than small incremental annual increases.

Existing System Approval

This fall letters were sent to existing Group B Public Water Systems on drilled wells for which there are no records of any formal approval process by the Health Department. If you have received a letter and have questions about it please contact Jesse Smith at (360) 414-5598. If you did not receive a letter and unsure about the approval status of your water system please feel free to also contact Jesse at the number listed.