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Hot Topic: Community Water Systems Required to Distribute Consumer Confidence Reports

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Hot Topics

for Tennessee cities and towns

October 30, 1998

#40

Community Water Systems Required to Distribute Consumer Confidence Reports

By Steve Wyatt
MTAS Utility Operations Specialist

A recent amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act established the requirement for community water systems (CWS) to prepare a consumer confidence report (CCR) to distribute to their customers. The final rule became effective September 18.

The report's purpose is to satisfy a major part of the public right-to-know requirement included in the Safe Drinking Water Act. A CCR is designed to provide information to community water systems customers so they can make informed, health-based decisions about consuming water.

Summary

The CCR is an annual report that contains information about the supply source, treatment, possible contaminants, compliance, definitions of terms, and other information concerning drinking water as required by the act. This report must be delivered to the CWS customers on or before the due date. The CCR should contain information for the preceding calendar year specific to the CWS. Various public and private organizations will be allowed to provide guidance documents and templates to help the CWS prepare the report. A completed CCR must be kept on file for five years.

An informative, well-planned CCR can improve a community water system's customer relations and trust. It is also an excellent vehicle to educate people about their drinking water.

Time Line

The first CCR is required to be delivered to the customers no later than **Oct. 19, 1999**. It will reflect calendar year 1998. All following CCRs will be required by July 1 for the preceding calendar year. A new water system must only complete a CCR after one full calendar year of operation.

Example:

CCR for 1998 is due on or before Oct. 19, 1999.

CCR for 1999 is due on or before July 1, 2000.

Wholesalers of potable water must provide the information to their customers by April 19, 1999 for the first year and by April 1 of every following year.

Delivery Requirements to Customers

There are different delivery requirements based upon the number of people the CWS serves.

- A. If the CWS serves more than 10,000 persons, it must mail the annual reports directly to the customers.
- B. The act authorizes the state's governor to provide alternatives to the direct mailing requirement for those systems that serve fewer than 10,000 people.

The CWS must also make a good faith effort to provide CCR information to those consumers who are not customers, such as college or university students, hospital patients, or apartment dwellers.

Other requirements include:

- ✓ The type of water supplied and its source.
- ✓ Notifying customers if a source assessment has been completed, explaining how to obtain a copy of the assessment.
- ✓ Concise definitions of the "maximum contaminant level goal" and the "maximum contaminant level."
- ✓ A table displaying data relating to contaminants. This data is derived from information collected for EPA and state monitoring purposes. Each separate source must have an individual table.
- ✓ A table listing detected contaminants. MCL and MCLG or action levels must be listed in the table.
- ✓ Information regarding health concerns that resulted in regulation of each regulated contaminant.
- ✓ A statement that explains which contaminant may be reasonably expected in the drinking water.
- ✓ A explanation of variances and exemptions for the CWS.
- ✓ The telephone number of the owner/operator.
- ✓ Information concerning the time and place for the public to participate in decisions that may affect water quality.
- ✓ The EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791) and instructions that the customer may call this number for further explanation.
- ✓ The CCR must be sent to the state on or before the deadline each year.

For additional information, contact Steve Wyatt, MTAS utility operations consultant, in the Jackson office at (901) 423-3710.

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