

# Guidance for Developing Good Operating Practice Procedures: Water- Council / Network Supply

August 2011  
Amendment 1

## Background

A water supply can be made up of one or more water sources:

- council or network water supply
- surface water
- groundwater
- roof water

This procedure applies to food businesses that source their water from public drinking-water supplies.

The Ministry of Health administers *Drinking-water Standards for New Zealand* which are used to assess the quality of New Zealand drinking-water supplies. The standards set out the acceptable limits for chemical, microbiological and radiological contaminants in water that is intended for drinking. If a drinking-water supply is determined to be unsafe, the local council will issue a notice via the media that the water is not safe to drink.

The water supplier, or water supply authority, is responsible for the quality of the water that is delivered to your business. Once received it is up to you to ensure clean water does not become contaminated. You are also expected to have procedures in place that enable quick, effective action to be taken whenever you are notified of a water quality problem.

This guidance has been developed to help you ensure your water supply does not compromise the safety and suitability of the food.

*For further guidance:*

Off-the-peg Food Control Plan: Food Service and Catering. [Section 2 – The Basics: Water supply](#) [201 KB PDF]

[Draft Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality Management in New Zealand \(2005\)](#)

Ministry of Health [Household Water Supplies](#) [1.54 MB PDF]

Ministry of Health [Water Collection Tanks and Safe Household Water](#) [337 KB PDF]

## 1 Purpose / Scope

Write up your purpose/scope for Water – Council/ Network supply.

*Example:* To ensure the quality of clean drinking-water is maintained once it has been delivered to the business and that immediate action is taken to keep food safe whenever notified of a water quality problem. Water includes ice and steam.

*See also (as applicable):*

- Surface water
- Groundwater
- Roof water

These topics have been covered individually in other guidance documents.

## 2 Authorities and Responsibilities

Write up who has specific authorities and responsibilities for water sourced the public drinking-water supplies. Think about managers, supervisors and other people as may be necessary.

*Example:* The business operator is responsible for ensuring all water used in the business is suitable for the use and maintains the safety and suitability of the food.

Other people or parties that have operational responsibility for this procedure are: [please identify who they are and specify their responsibilities].

## 3 Control Measures

Write up how you ensure the water is safe to use.

Consider at least the following points:

### 3.1 Water Source

- how you ensure the food is kept safe whenever notified of a water quality problem, e.g.:

- ensuring you take the action that is recommended in a notice (e.g. boil the water for one minute or disinfect using chlorine) or find an alternative supply until the notice has been lifted (e.g. bottled water, or water from a registered water tanker); and
- ensuring any affected food and water is dealt with appropriately to safeguard consumer health (refer to the Corrective Action section below).

### 3.2 Water Reticulation

- how you ensure the quality of clean water delivered to the business is maintained, e.g.:
  - ensuring the water reticulation system (e.g. pipe work, hoses, hot water cylinders and associated equipment) is suitable for the purpose meets the requirements of relevant New Zealand legislation such as the Building Act and any local council regulations;
  - ensuring there are no cross connections between reticulation systems for potable water and non-potable water;
  - providing back flow prevention devices at critical points in the system to prevent contamination of clean water (e.g. hot water cylinders);
  - maintaining water pipes, filters, pumps and other parts of the reticulation system in good condition and according to the manufacturers' instructions;
  - ensuring there are no dead-ends or unused pipes in the system where water can stagnate; and
  - ensuring pipes are flushed following periods of inactivity (such as seasonal shut-downs) and after any repairs to the system (i.e. turn on taps and allow a significant flow of water through to remove stale water, rust, scale and other material from the system).
- how you ensure lesser quality water cannot be mistaken for clean/drinking water, e.g.:
  - ensuring all water lines conveying non-potable water for cleaning down exterior areas, flushing toilets, supplying fire-fighting equipment etc. are clearly identified at:
    - o all outlets;
    - o junctions and valves;
    - o both sides of wall penetrations; and
    - o any other place where identification is necessary to distinguish the water type

## 4 Monitoring

Write up how you check your water reticulation system is working effectively.

Consider the following:

- check infrastructure (e.g. pumps, piping etc.) is fully operational and well maintained. Any specialised equipment is being operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions (e.g. schedule routine maintenance in advance and check that it is done);
- regularly check water tanks (e.g. inlet and outlet screens, access covers in place, strainer clear of debris, structural integrity, sludge level is below the water outlet level, tanks are internally clean);
- Look for evidence of problems (e.g. lack of water pressure, evidence that there may be a leak) and deal with issues when they arise; and
- make regular visual, smell and taste checks of water at point of use to determine that the system is operating as intended or whether something may be wrong.

## 5 Corrective Action

If notified of a water quality problem by your local council, take the action they recommend or find an alternative supply to use until the notice has been lifted.

Write up how you correct any problems that monitoring identifies in your water reticulation system.

Include how you cover the following:

1. Defining the extent of the problem (i.e. what has happened, how/why it happened, and if appropriate how much if any product has been affected);
2. Restoring control (e.g. arranging for repairs and maintenance to be carried out on your water reticulation system, as necessary) or find an alternative water supply so you can continue to operate (e.g. bottled water/water from a registered water tanker, or water that has been boiled for one minute/disinfected by adding chlorine);
3. Dealing with food and other things affected by the problem (e.g. hold/recall/destruction of suspected product / water); and

4. Preventing re-occurrence (e.g. review maintenance programme; review incident with verifier and/or water professional).

If you are concerned about the water quality you should contact your supplier (usually your city or district council).

## 6 Documentation and Record Keeping

Determine what records you need to keep for this procedure. These will help you to introduce and maintain consistent good practices, and to demonstrate to your verifier (auditor) that you are sufficiently controlling those factors that can impact on the safety and suitability of the food.

Assess any records you already have, and introduce any additional records you need for the monitoring and corrective action activities you specify in your procedure. When monitoring, you may have an option to either:

- record every check; or
- indicate that checks have regularly been carried out (e.g. throughout a week) and only record the results of a specific check where something went wrong. In these instances, always make a record of what you did to put things right (the corrective action).

Keep blank record forms handy for staff to use and let people know where they are. Keep completed record forms together where they can be found easily for your regular internal verification checks.

For your [general programme requirements](#) refer to the guidance document on the appropriate risk-based programme or plan which can be found on the Food Safety website.