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# Small Public Water Systems

A Publication For Group B Public Water System Owners and Managers

Volume 1, Issue 1

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## New Funding and Fees for Small Public Water Systems

Beginning in 2009, small public water systems, also known as Group B public water systems, will pay a \$95 annual permit fee. The fee ensures that services, such as emergency response, technical support, regulatory assistance, and help with water system management, remain available. In the past, the majority of funding for the Drinking Water Program came from state general funds. However, with the current downturn in the economy, support from the state is being eliminated. The Board of Health chose to implement the annual permit fee so that Thurston County can continue providing important services for small public water systems.

Public water system owners and managers are on the front line to protect public health. The Drinking Water Program provides support to approximately 700 Group B public water systems to ensure they meet the requirements to operate safe and reliable water systems.

Services include:

- Information and assistance through telephone calls, e-mail, written materials, website ([www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw)), and face-to-face consultation.

- Help with response to coliform or other water quality exceedence events and, if needed, methods of disinfecting the water system.



- Help developing preventative operations and maintenance programs.
- Conducting periodic sanitary surveys (a comprehensive inspection) of the water system to determine if there are any water supply, water quality, or management problems.

A packet of information and forms will be sent to you in the near future. We appreciate the effort you put forth to maintain your water system and look forward to working with you in the future.

For more information, contact the Environmental Health Drinking Water Program at 360-754-3355 Ext. 6518.

### What is a Group B Public Water System?

Group B public water systems have 2 to 14 service connections or serve less than 25 people per day. While 2-Party public water systems are considered Group B systems, they are regulated differently; see our website for more details.

## Simple Steps to Keep Your Water Supply Safe

**Test for coliform bacteria annually and nitrate every three years.** Thurston County Environmental Health Laboratory is certified to run coliform and nitrate analysis on water samples. For more information, contact the water quality laboratory staff at 360-786-5465.

**Keep hazardous substances away from your well.** Gasoline, paint, motor oil, and yard chemicals should be at least 100 feet from the well and pump house.

**Do preventative maintenance regularly** on your water system to prevent future problems.

**Educate water users** (customers) about keeping an area around the well free of potential contaminants, conserving water resources, and their responsibility to contribute

to the financial well-being of the water system.

**Keep a list of contact information** in case there is an emergency situation with your water supply. Have a plan in place to effectively reach all your water customers, if needed.

**Have a backup source of electricity** to power your pumps and other electrical equipment that runs the water system. Know someone who can work on your water system within a reasonable and appropriate time frame.



## Is Your Water System Information Current?

Thurston County Drinking Water Program strives to keep its water system records up-to-date. This is important if we need to contact you in an emergency, help resolve water system problems, mail out information, or announce educational opportunities.

Please let us know if there is a new owner or manager name, new phone number, or new mailing address.

**To update your information please call or e-mail our Drinking Water Program staff,** or request a copy of your Water Facilities Information (WFI) form to correct and return. It is important to make all corrections directly on your existing WFI form and not on a blank form. This makes changes readily seen by those who update the records.

The Water Facilities Information form, or WFI, is stored on Washington State Department of Health's Office of Drinking Water SENTRY internet website. SENTRY internet provides a

host of information on a water system such as ownership, past water quality information and more.

You can download a copy of your system's WFI by visiting the SENTRY internet website: [www4.doh.wa.gov/sentryinternet](http://www4.doh.wa.gov/sentryinternet).

## Flood Advice For Drinking Water Systems

January 7, 2009, was a day some in our community would like to forget. That was when their drinking water system experienced some degree of flooding. Floods pose a particular threat to drinking water systems because floodwaters often carry biological and chemical contaminants that can end up at a consumer's tap.

Whenever a well is flooded, assume the water is contaminated. Contaminants can enter the water supply if the well or the area immediately around the well floods.



### What To Do If Your Well Floods

**1. Advise customers** to bring their tap water to a rolling boil for one minute before using, or purchase bottled water for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, or preparing food. Customers should continue to take this precaution until notified the water is safe to drink.

**2. Notify customers before disinfecting.** Of special concern are people with unique medical needs, such as kidney dialysis patients. People with aquariums or ponds that contain fish will also want to know that the water is to be chlorinated. In addition, high levels of chlorine may damage clothes washed the first day after disinfection.

**3. Disinfect well.** Chlorine is one of the most common ways to kill bacteria or parasites in water. Add chlorine bleach to your well according to the Thurston County handout *Disinfecting Your Well*, available on our website. Remember to purge the well before adding chlorine. This should be done as soon as you are able to gain safe access to the well. Exercise caution anytime an electrical power supply component is under or near floodwater.

**4. Collect coliform bacteria water samples in 3-4 days** after flushing system of chlorine. Collect samples at the well and several points throughout the distribution system, following the instructions found with the sample bottle. Contact Thurston County Environmental Health for a sample bottle pick-up and drop-off location nearest you.

**5. Evaluate test results.** The coliform bacteria lab test report should indicate "satisfactory" results. An "unsatisfactory" result may mean there

are disease causing bacteria in your water supply. If this happens, disinfect the well again. Wait 3-4 days, then retest for coliform bacteria.

**6. After a flood** groundwater supplies may take some time to recover from the effects of the flood. As a result, it may take several weeks before coliform test results come back satisfactory. Until then you should continue to advise customers not to use the water for drinking water purposes without boiling first.

### Can I Shower or Bathe in Water that May Be Contaminated?

Yes, unless you have an open wound, your risk of exposure is minimal. Your chances of getting sick from contaminated water is greatest if you take the water into your mouth.

### Can I Protect My Well from Future Floods?

If your well was covered by flood waters, you may want to extend the top of your well casing to above flood stage. This will help prevent contaminants from entering the water supply through the top of your well. For help, contact a licensed well driller. Only a licensed well driller is authorized to work on a well. A list of certified well drillers is available on the WA Department of Ecology website.

### Additional Resources

Thurston County Drinking Water Program:  
[www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw)

WA Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water: [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw)

WA Department of Ecology, well information:  
[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wells/wellhome](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wells/wellhome)



## Comments or Suggestions?



The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information on how to properly operate your water system. Well trained and educated water system operators and managers are much better equipped to deal with the day-to-day demands of running a water system, and react appropriately in the face of an emergency.

We appreciate your feedback and are interested in learning what topics you would like to see in this newsletter.

Please contact any of the Drinking Water staff by phone or e-mail with your comments. Staff contact information is on the front of this newsletter or at our website:

**[www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehdw)**.

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**Thurston County Public Health and Social Services**  
*Always working for a safer and healthier community*

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