

Drinking water management system review and audit

Background

The *Public Health Act 2010* and the Public Health Regulation 2012 require drinking water suppliers to develop and adhere to a 'quality assurance program' or drinking water management system (DWMS). The DWMS must address the elements of the Framework as set out in the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines*. The *NSW Guidelines for Drinking Water Management Systems* provide information on the reporting and review requirements.

Evaluation and audit of how drinking water quality is being managed is an element of the Framework. Water utilities should plan for external review or audit to demonstrate how they satisfy requirements of the *Public Health Act 2010* and Regulation 2012. Regardless of the audits commissioned by the water utility, NSW Health has the authority to commission a comprehensive review of utilities' DWMS.

Internal Review

The DWMS must be reviewed by the water utility at least annually to ensure that it is being properly implemented and risks are effectively addressed. DWMS must be kept current.

The internal review should consider critical control point (CCP) performance, response to exceptions, and progress on actions and improvements.

A brief annual review report should be provided to the local Public Health Unit (PHU). The DWMS should also be provided if any changes were made. CCP data monitoring and annual report templates have been developed to provide utilities with tools to report and review DWMS implementation. Water utilities may use the template options available on the NSW Health website or develop their own format. Water utilities can contact their local PHU for assistance in using the templates.

External Review/Audit

Water utilities should consult with their local PHU to develop an external review/audit frequency. Some utilities have effectively had an audit of their DWMS with recent support projects and therefore may not require an audit in the near future.

Key areas for inclusion in the audit scope include:

- effectiveness of DWMS implementation
- CCP performance, including record keeping and response to exceptions
- adequacy of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- progress on actions and opportunities for improvement
- any changes to the DWMS that should be submitted to NSW Health
- incident management procedures
- training, mentoring and support for staff to familiarise them with SOPs and CCPs

The water utility should discuss the scope of the review or audit with their local PHU. The *NSW Guidelines for Drinking Water Management Systems* provides the basis for a comprehensive audit of the elements of the Framework.

	Internal Review	External Audit /Review
Frequency	At least annually	Consult with PHU
Initiator	Water utility	Water utility or NSW Health
Reviewer	Water utility	NSW Health approved auditor/reviewer
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of management system • Risks effectively addressed • CCP performance • Response to exceptions • Progress on actions and improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine in consultation with PHU but will include all items from internal review

The review/audit report should:

- consider all relevant records including DPI Water and PHU inspections or reports
- focus on identifying opportunities for improvement, rather than adopting a pass/fail approach
- provide clear and specific recommendations to improve drinking water risk management
- prioritise recommendations in order of risk

The audit must be carried out by an independent reviewer or auditor approved by NSW Health. NSW Health approves the use of drinking water quality auditors on the IPART Audit Panel for this purpose. The link to the Panel is included under 'more information'. Auditors are not limited to this Panel.

NSW Health will consider requests for the external review/audit to be conducted by a suitably qualified peer (for example, an engineer from another utility who is familiar with the Framework). Water utilities should consult their local PHU for advice on peer review.

More information

IPART Panel:

http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Water/Private_Sector_Licensing_WICA/Audit_Guidelines_Technical_Services_Audit_Panel

The NSW Guidelines for Drinking Water Management Systems (2013)

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/water>

Acknowledgments

NSW DPI Water
