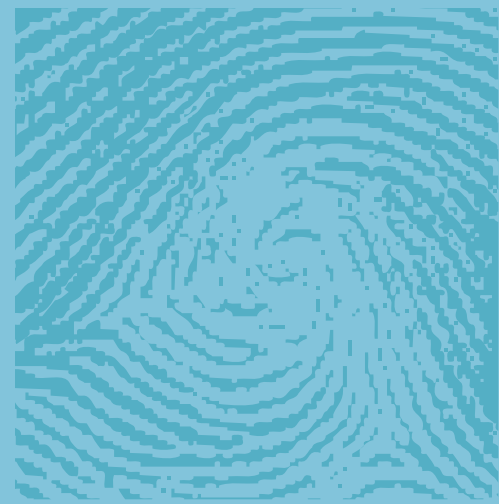


Drinking Water Regulatory Unit

The Department of Human Services' Drinking Water Regulatory Unit is "open" for business.

Issue 1, August 2004



Victorian water businesses have been important contributors to the process of developing the legislation and regulations. The Water Regulatory Unit looks forward to working with the industry to successfully implement the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*. This collaborative effort will extend to include Parks Victoria and the five Alpine Resort Management Boards, now officially designated water suppliers.

Jennifer McDonald, Manager Food Safety and Water Regulation manages the Unit. Brian Labza has recently joined, bringing his expertise and knowledge of the water industry to the Unit.

The responsibility for policy and incident and emergency management remains with the Environmental Health Unit Water Program. Further details relating to incident management are included in this newsletter.

If you have any matters you wish to discuss please call Julie Hoy, Drinking Water Regulatory Unit, on 9637 4046.

Safe drinking water regulations - regulatory impact statement

The preparation of a regulatory impact statement (RIS) and the associated process is required under the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*, and is the responsibility of the department that initiates the legislation. The purpose of a RIS is to provide an assessment of the costs and benefits of the regulatory proposal to be undertaken.

Parliamentary Counsel has completed the draft Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2004 for the public consultation.

The RIS is currently being drafted and will be completed by September, and the consultation period of 28 days will commence. The RIS and draft regulations will be sent to all water businesses and stakeholders for comment during the period of the public consultation.

The responsibility for reviewing regulatory impact statements and advising on the economic impact of significant new legislation lies with the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, located within the Department of Treasury and Finance.

The Victorian process mandates consultation with stakeholders, including business, interest groups and the general public, both leading up to and following the preparation of an RIS. Consultation is also required with any other Minister whose area of responsibility may be affected by a proposed statutory rule and any sector of the public on which an appreciable economic or social burden may be imposed.

If you would like to learn more about the RIS process, the Regulatory Impact Statement Handbook is available at

[http://www.vcec.vic.gov.au/CA256EAF001C7B21/WebObj/regulat/\\$File/regulat.pdf](http://www.vcec.vic.gov.au/CA256EAF001C7B21/WebObj/regulat/$File/regulat.pdf)

Incident management

Under Section 22 of the Act, an officer of a water supplier or a water storage manager must report an incident that may cause, or be responsible for transmission of an illness; contain a pathogen or cause widespread public complaint immediately.

Threats to water supplies that may result in a public health risk include sewage spillage, blue-green algae blooms, microbiological contamination, disinfection breakdown, chemical and radiological contamination, terrorism or deliberate contamination, natural disaster and loss of supply.

In the event of an incident that you assess as a risk to public health, you are required to contact the Department of Human Services on 132 222 and quote the pager number 87457. This service is available 24 hours a day, and will connect you with a senior public health officer who will advise you in relation to the incident.

The department will assess public health consequences, and can also advise on decision-making and operational responses, assist with public notification and provision of alternate water supplies.

Metropolitan and regional water suppliers are required to have emergency management plans that should include details of trigger or alert mechanisms and department contact details. The department needs to be kept informed of actions by the water business until the incident is fully resolved.

The department also plays a significant role in relation to overall emergency planning and incidents that relate to terrorism and deliberate contamination. The department has developed a Public Health Emergency Management Plan that includes a section detailing the emergency responses in relation to reticulated water supplies, private supplies such as tanks and major water storages.

Materials and associated risk assessment tools presented at the recent information sessions “Threat Assessment to Water” will help you assess and manage risk or threat to your water supply or storage.

For further information on incident reporting and management please contact John Siapantas, Manager Water Program, 9 637 4221.

Water quality monitoring reporting

From July 1, water suppliers have been asked to provide results to the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit in an interim format. The Drinking Water Regulatory Unit is currently exploring its data management requirements prior to establishing a permanent system to store, manage and process the water quality monitoring reports. The Unit will contact water businesses and laboratories to determine an acceptable method of provision of required data within the information limitations of your systems.

Please note that the interim reporting format we have asked for comprises two sections—the first is a summary of the monthly results and the second a rolling twelve-month report that utilises the Australian drinking water guidelines *Guide to Assessing Long-term Performance*. These calculations will take time to develop due to the requirement to calculate 95 per cent upper confidence limit of the 95th percentile, means and standard deviations.

We suggest that water suppliers and laboratories commence the calculation of these results to ensure that all reporting systems are functioning smoothly by the end of the first year. To assist those unaccustomed to this process, we are developing a fact sheet to provide some basic statistical information and sample calculations.

Contacts

Call Julie Hoy for queries relating to the Drinking Water Regulatory Unit on 9 637 4090 or julie.hoy@dhs.vic.gov.au

Call John Siapantas for queries relating to incident reporting on 9 637 4221 or john.siapantas@dhs.vic.gov.au

If you would like to be on our mailing list email julie.hoy@dhs.vic.gov.au