

Applying for a variation to frequency at which samples of drinking water are collected

Drinking Water Regulation Guidance Note No. 8
July 2006

Introduction

Regulation 11(3) of the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2005 allows for the Secretary to the Department of Human Services, on his or her own motion, or upon the review of an application from a water supplier, to vary the frequency at which samples of drinking water are to be collected at a water sampling point located within a water sampling locality in respect of the quality standards specified in schedule 2 of the Regulations.

When to make an application for a variation to the frequency at which samples of drinking water are collected

Water suppliers can apply to increase or decrease the frequency at which samples are collected. Water businesses should engage in preliminary discussions with Department of Human Services' Drinking Water Regulatory Section to determine if a proposal to vary a frequency at which water samples are collected is appropriate.

An application (or action by the Secretary) to increase the frequency at which samples are collected may be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where there is a perceived public health risk in a water

supply, and there is a need to confirm or quantify the magnitude of that risk.

- For a water sampling locality with a population greater than 5,000, where the water supplier is sampling and monitoring for the *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) standard in accordance with Table 10.2 of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2004.

An application to decrease the frequency at which samples are collected may be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where there are significant seasonal population fluctuations, in particular where there are no permanent populations, such as an alpine resort, a recreational area or a camping ground.
- Where a continuous monitoring period of at least twelve (12) consecutive months has demonstrated that a parameter occurs consistently at a level well below the quality standard prescribed by schedule 2. Other features of the water supply, as described in regulation 11(4) will also be considered in the assessment of these applications.

An application to vary the frequency at which samples of drinking water are to be collected will not be accepted if the proposal is likely to result in an increased public health risk.

For example, given the significance of *Escherichia coli* and turbidity as indicators of water quality, it is unlikely that the Department would consider an application to reduce the frequency at which samples for these parameters are collected.

When an application to reduce the frequency at which samples are collected is approved, the following conditions must be included in the application:

- Where a parameter with an approved variation to sampling frequency exceeds the relevant water quality standard, sampling for that parameter will revert to the prescribed scheduled frequency for a period of at least twelve (12) months.
- A parameter with a prescribed scheduled frequency of monthly sampling will not be reduced to less than quarterly sampling.

A variation does not alter the obligation of a water supplier to have all samples analysed in accordance with regulation 12 or the requirement to submit these results to the Department (regulation 13).

Applying for an variation

Applications for variations to sampling frequency must be submitted in writing using the DHS "*Application for variation to the frequency at which a sample of drinking water is collected*" form. This form can be obtained from the website: www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking or from DHS Drinking Water Regulatory Section:
Ph: (03) 9096 0406.

The application form requires the applicant to provide information as specified by regulation 11(4). This includes:

- (a) The reasons the variation is sought;
- (b) The details of the water supplier and the water sampling locality for which the variation is sought;
- (c) The parameter for which the variation is sought;
- (d) The chemicals or other substances used to treat or disinfect the water;
- (e) The permanent and seasonal populations;
- (f) The time period for which the variation is sought;
- (g) A summary of available historical data for the parameter(s) for which the variation is sought, including the previous 12 months if available;
- (h) Additional risk management processes that will be implemented if a reduction to sampling frequency is sought and
- (i) The proposed water sampling program for the water sampling locality in respect of the parameter for which the variation is sought.

The Secretary may also request additional information to aid in the assessment of the application.

Applicants will be given written notice on the outcome of the assessment. Where the Secretary initiates the variation to frequency of sample collection, the water supplier will be consulted in relation to the proposed variation.

Lodgement of applications and further information

Please forward completed applications to:

Assistant Director,
Environmental Health,
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 4057,
Melbourne, VIC 3001

Or
Fax (03) 9096 9182

All confirmed variations to the frequency at which samples of drinking water are collected will be published in the Government Gazette. The water supplier will be notified in writing of the decision.

For further information:

Ph: (03) 9096 0406
Fax: (03) 9096 9182
Email: dwru@dhs.vic.gov.au
Website: www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/water/drinking

Published by Drinking Water Regulatory Section
Victorian Government Department of Human
Services, Melbourne, Victoria.

July 2006

© Copyright State of Victoria, Department of
Human Services, 2006

Authorised by the State Government of Victoria,
50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.