



Training Requirements for Operators of Small Drinking Water Systems (SDWS)

O. Reg 319/08 (Small Drinking Water Systems) requires that operators of SDWS be trained in drinking water system operation and maintenance. The Directive issued under s. 7 of the regulation specifies the specific training requirements for the operator(s). The types of training specified in the Directive are guided by a document produced by the Ministry of Health called the “Small Drinking Water Systems Risk Assessment Guideline, 2018”.

Please refer to your most recent Directive. Part 7 will specify the operator training requirement for your SDWS which will fall into one of the following four categories:

1. Educational Material Only

No formal training required. This would only apply to a system where posting is permitted (posting of warning signs advising customers not to consume the water). The operator(s) must have knowledge in following areas:

- general protection requirements (notification of users) and record keeping

2. Introduction to Small Drinking Water Systems

This course was delivered by Peterborough Public Health for a limited time in 2022-2023 and is no longer offered. If your Directive states that you must take this course, take Basics for SDWS instead.

3. Basics for Small Drinking Water Systems

This course is delivered by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre. This level of training is required for operators of systems using groundwater where primary treatment is provided. The operator(s) must have knowledge in following areas:

- groundwater basics, well basics, source water protection (groundwater), storage tanks
- proper sampling techniques, lab submission process, understanding results
- responding to an adverse result
- notification of users – adverse result or observation
- potential of system failure, impacts of system failure
- ability to operate and understand why and how the treatment system works and what to do if it fails
- ability to maintain the operation of the equipment to, at minimum, the manufacturer’s recommended instructions

4. Advanced for Small Drinking Water Systems

This course is offered by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre. This level of training is required for operators of systems using groundwater and/or surface water which have primary treatment and a distribution system with secondary treatment. The operator(s) must have knowledge in following areas:

- those items listed under Basics for SDWS above
- distribution system sampling and maintenance of disinfection residual
- management of distribution system breaks
- source water protection (surface water)

In addition to the above, all operators are expected to be aware of their obligations under the regulation, to be familiar with the operation of equipment specific to their system, as well as safety and emergency procedures.

The courses Basics for Small Drinking Water Systems and Advanced for Small Drinking Water Systems may be taken through the Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC). To register, visit wcwc.ca or call 1-866-515-0550.

Please refer to the questions and answers which follow. If you have any further questions, please contact Chris Eaton, Public Health Inspector, at 705-743-1000, ext. 225 or by email ceaton@peterboroughpublichealth.ca

Training Requirements for Operators of Small Drinking Water Systems (SDWS) Questions and Answers

Do I have to take my training from the Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC)?

No. Training from other training providers may be accepted at the discretion of PPH provided it meets the same learning objectives. Bear in mind that Basics for SDWS and Advanced for SDWS were developed by WCWC in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and were designed to meet the needs of Regulation 319/08 SDWS operators in Ontario.

As the owner of a SDWS, do I have to take the training if I hire an operator to operate my SDWS?

If you designate an employee or hire an operations company to operate your system, then no, you do not need to complete the training. The employee or operations company staff must be properly trained. Note that the regulation requires that every owner of a SDWS designate an operator and to notify the health unit (PPH) whenever the operator of a SDWS changes.

Do all of my staff have to take training?

No. Only the designated operator(s) under s. 6 of the regulation need to complete the training specified by Part 7 of your Directive. Additional staff are welcome to take the same training as the operator. It is good practice to have more than one person trained – the operator should have a backup.

As operator, do I have to personally take every water sample?

No. As operator you may designate someone (called a “supervised person”) to collect and submit the sample on your behalf. You are responsible to train that person and must be available to them by telephone should they have questions. If they perform this task routinely, it is recommended that they complete the same training course as the operator.

As operator, do I have to personally measure chlorine residual or turbidity every time?

No. As operator you may designate someone (called a “supervised person”) to perform operational checks such as checking the UV, measuring chlorine residual or turbidity. You are responsible to train that person and must be available to them by telephone should they have questions. If they perform these tasks routinely, it is recommended that they complete the same training course as the operator.

Once I complete Basics for SDWS, is there any requirement for ongoing education/training?

No. But you are welcome to take other courses such as those mentioned in the question below.

Once I complete Advanced for SDWS, is there any requirement for ongoing education/training?

Yes. You are required to complete a training course every five years. Courses may include Small Systems Hands-on Workshop, Best Practices for Small Systems, Disinfection: Chlorine, Ultraviolet Treatment of Drinking Water, or Groundwater and Well Basics, all offered by the WCWC. It is suggested that you take a course which interests you or one which covers sources or treatment approaches or issues which reflect your SDWS. Other courses may be accepted at the discretion of PPH.

My Directive says to take Advanced for SDWS. Do I have to take Basics for SDWS first?

No. Basics for SDWS is not a prerequisite for Advanced for SDWS.

My Directive says to take Basics for SDWS. There are only Advanced for SDWS courses available. Can I take Advanced for SDWS instead?

Yes. Advanced covers the same material as Basics, and adds information on surface water sources, chlorine for primary and secondary treatment, and distribution systems.

My Directive says to take Advanced for SDWS. There are only Basics for SDWS courses available. Can I take Basics for SDWS instead?

No. You will miss information on surface water sources, chlorine, and distribution systems.

I took the course Operation of Small Drinking Water Systems (OSDWS). Do I have to take Advanced for SDWS?

If your Directive says to, then yes - but not until three years has elapsed since you completed OSDWS. We are no longer requiring that you be a “trained person” by taking OSDWS and a recertification course every three years. We are requiring that you complete Advanced for SDWS because it is designed specifically for regulation 319 SDWS operators whereas OSDWS is intended for operators of regulation 170 (Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks) small systems.

My Directive says that I must take the course Introduction to Small Drinking Water Systems (ISDWS) but it is no longer offered. What shall I do?

Take Basics for SDWS instead. ISDWS was developed and offered by PPH in 2022-2023 to provide a training option for SDWS which use a secure groundwater source (and are exempt from providing treatment). A limited number of SDWS in our area meet these criteria and there is insufficient demand to run that course again.

Is there an online or virtual option for Basics for SDWS or Advanced for SDWS?

No. These courses were designed as hands-on courses. Participants complete group activities such as servicing UVs and chlorine pumps, performing operational checks, and water quality testing.

Do I really have to do this?

Yes. The training specified in your Directive is a legal requirement. The authority for this can be found in s. 7 of Ontario regulation 319/08 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Having well trained operators is a key component of the provision of safe water by operators of the 350 SDWS in Peterborough County and City.

Who shall I contact if I have other questions or concerns?

Please contact Chris Eaton, Public Health Inspector at 705-743-1000, ext. 225 or by email ceaton@peterboroughpublichealth.ca