



# Sanitary Surveys:

## Preparing for an inspection of your public water system

A sanitary survey is an inspection of the water system facilities, operations, and records to assess and identify conditions that may present a sanitary or public health risk. In New Mexico, all public water systems must have a routine sanitary survey completed once every three to five years.

A Compliance Officer from the New Mexico Environment Department's Drinking Water Bureau (NMED DWB) will conduct your sanitary survey. They will contact you when it's due and arrange a date for the survey.

### **How do I prepare for the survey?**

Prior to the survey, you will be contacted by the Compliance Officer to arrange a time and date for the inspection. We want your sanitary survey to be successful. This guidance will help you prepare and avoid significant deficiencies. You should:

- Set aside time for the Compliance Officer.*** Plan on having someone knowledgeable of the water system take the Compliance Officer through the system and the files. It is possible that one person will be more qualified to walk the Compliance Officer through the physical system and someone else will have more knowledge of the monitoring, compliance and data aspects.
- Be prepared to access all parts of the system.*** This includes accessing each source; all tanks, all treatment facilities, and any pump stations and pressure reducing stations. Make sure you have keys available to all locked facilities, including gated areas, and ladder extensions and safety equipment if needed to access tanks.
- Have records on hand.*** This includes well logs, monitoring records, RTCR monitoring plan, Stage 1 or Stage 2 Disinfection Byproducts monitoring plan (if applicable), and Lead & Copper Monitoring Plan (if Applicable), past sanitary survey reports, and as-built drawings.
- Have questions prepared for the Compliance Officer.*** This is an excellent opportunity to address any questions you may have regarding monitoring, reporting results, compliance, public notification requirements, etc.

### **8 elements of all routine sanitary surveys**

1. System Management & Operation
2. Distribution system
3. Sources
4. Pumps and pumping facilities
5. Treatment
6. Monitoring, reporting, and Data Verification
7. Finished water storage
8. Operator certification status

### **Before the sanitary survey**

- Inventory all structures, man-made materials, and land use within 100 feet of any water source.*** Identify all microbial and chemical contaminant threats. Prepare a plan to eliminate or mitigate them. Discuss your plan and provide a copy to the Compliance Officer during the survey.
  - Inspect your water source facilities.*** Verify the integrity of seals and screens used to keep contaminants out of the well casing or spring box.
  - Inspect your Storage Tank Facilities.*** Verify the roof hatch, vent, and roof structure are weatherproof. Verify the integrity of the screens installed over the vent and overflow outlet.
  - Be prepared to provide current photographs of the parts of your water system the Compliance Officer may not be able to access. For example, photograph the storage tank roof that must be climbed. Photographs should verify all storage tank roof vents, hatches, overflows, drains and openings where the level gauge wire enters each tank are sealed or properly screened to keep contaminants out.
  - Your storage tank overflow pipe outlet should terminate 12-18 inches above the ground surface and appropriately screened or covered with a hinged flap valve.

- A raw source water sample tap must be on each source.
- Each well house, pump station, and storage tank should be secure from unauthorized access.
- Animals should not be able enter your buildings.
- The outlet pipe for any pump control valve or vacuum relief valve should have an approved air gap and screen.
- Water treatment chemicals should be NSF-approved for use in potable water. Any hard-piped water supply into the chemical solution tank should be built with an air gap or equipped with an approved reduced pressure backflow assembly.

### **During and after your sanitary survey**

- Water system personnel meet with the Compliance Officer to discuss records and provide a tour of the water system facilities, pump house, treatment unit, storage, booster pumps, distribution system, and so on.
- After the survey, the Compliance Officer sends you a completed survey letter and report of findings. Be sure to read the report carefully. It describes any deficiencies found during the inspection and the associated corrective action you must take.
- You must address significant deficiencies and significant findings by the assigned due date. Please review any observations and recommendations noted in the survey report.
- You must provide appropriate compliance documentation as outlined in the survey report when you complete the necessary corrections. If unable to make the corrections by the due date, you must submit a corrective action plan with a timeline indicating when items will be corrected. Any proposed corrective action plans must be approved by us. We track any significant deficiencies and significant findings assigned a due date until you correct them.
- Keep a copy of the survey results and all other survey-related follow-up documentation and correspondence (including your own) for your records.
- Don't wait for the next sanitary survey: Make self-inspections of source and storage tank vents, covers, seals, and screens part of your routine operations and maintenance program.

### **Significant Deficiency**

Any system defect or failure that the state determines to be causing, or have potential for causing, the introduction of contamination into the water delivered to consumers.

In order to protect public health, significant deficiencies require corrective action.

### **Correcting Significant Deficiencies**

Public Water System deficiencies that are critical enough to warrant designation as “significant deficiencies” must be corrected within required timeframes. The resolution may include immediate corrective action, or may require an NMED DWB approved compliance schedule – depending on the nature of the problem.

Failure to correct significant deficiencies is an enforceable violation.

Any changes to the system including construction, alteration, or extensions must meet engineering plan and specification review requirements *before* they occur. Information on engineering plan and specification requirements can be located at <https://www.env.nm.gov/dwb/watersystemmodificationdesignconstruction.htm>