

Water Carters (Guidelines for) - NSW Health

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Summary Specifies requirements of containers etc for water carters.

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Environmental Health Officers of Local Councils, NSW Dept of Health, Public Health Units

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Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

CIRCULAR

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NSW HEALTH GUIDELINES FOR WATER CARTERS

NSW Health has developed the following public health guidelines for the operation of water carting vehicles supplying water for drinking and domestic use.

These guidelines are in addition to any provisions required by the local council (water supply authority) to protect their assets.

Water carters may offer an alternative water supply in areas where the water supply is insufficient or is temporarily unsuitable.

1. LEGISLATION

The treatment and handling of water that is used or intended to be used for human consumption gives rise to a general duty of care and is also specifically regulated by law under the Public Health Act, 1991, the Food Act, 1989, and the Local Government Act, 1993.

i) Food Act, 1989

Section 3 of the Food Act, 1989, defines food as:

“a substance or compound commonly used, or represented as being for use, as food or drink for human consumption or as an ingredient (whether or not after processing) of food or drink for human consumption or use,....”.

If a water supply authority sells water to a water carter as potable and fit for human consumption then it is a food for the purposes of the Food Act, 1989. Similarly, if a water carter sells water to a consumer as potable and fit for human consumption then it is a food.

If the water contains any foreign matter it may be considered adulterated under Section 8(n) of the Food Act, 1989, and the supplier may have committed an offence under section 9(3) of that Act by selling the water.

Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

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In accordance with the provisions incorporated in the Accounts and Audit Determination, the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and their equivalents, within a public health organisation, shall be held responsible for ensuring the observance of Departmental policy (including circulars and procedure manuals) as issued by the Minister and the Director-General of the Department of Health.

The water tank and hoses etc are also subject to specifications set out in the document issued by Safe Food Australia, *A Guide to the Food Safety Standards- Standard 3.2.2, Division 5 – Cleaning, sanitizing and maintenance* (clauses 19 to 21).

ii) Public Health Act, 1991

Under section 101 of the Public Health Act, 1991, the Chief Health Officer may give direction to prevent or restrict the use of water supplied by a carter or give directions to bring the water into a safe condition.

iii) Local Government Act, 1993

The Local Government Act, 1993, and Local Government (Orders) Regulation, 1999, also contain specific provisions for the regulation of water carting vehicles by local councils. Section 124 of the Act sets out the council's powers to order the owner or operator of a vehicle used for the storage and transportation of food (including drinking water) to take action as specified by the council to render the vehicle in a clean or sanitary condition. Part 4, Clause 19 of the Orders Regulation specifies particular requirements, including that a water carting vehicle must have an aperture that is large enough to enable easy inspection and thorough cleaning of the interior and must have a cover that is able to be kept clean.

A clean or sanitary condition has not been defined in the Local Government Act, 1993, but if the conditions below are met the water and vehicle would be considered clean and sanitary.

Section 68(2) Part B(1) of the Local Government Act, 1993, allows a person to draw water from a council water supply and sell the water, but only with the prior approval of the council.

The Local Government Act, 1993, also contains a provision excluding liability and claims under certain circumstances, if the matter or thing (actions or omissions) was done in good faith for the purpose of executing the Act. However if the Council (water supply authority) is aware of the problem and has failed to do anything to remedy the situation, it is unlikely that it is acting in good faith.

2. WATER QUALITY

i) Guidelines

Water carter operators providing potable water for human consumption should source water from a water supply that meets the 1996 NHMRC/ARMCANZ *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG)*. The water must meet the microbiological guidelines as a minimum. Appropriate sources of water would include abstraction from reticulated supplies, or directly from a bulk water supplier at the point of treatment.

The water source must not exceed drinking water guidelines for blue-green algae or their toxins. It is the responsibility of the water carter to ensure that this requirement has been met.

Note: When water that meets the ADWG is added to an empty rainwater tank it may resuspend the sludge in the bottom of the rainwater tank creating taste and turbidity problems.

ii) Treatment

The water source should be chlorinated prior to carting, to ensure the safety of the supply. The operator must maintain an adequate chlorine residual up to the point of supply to consumers. An adequate free chlorine residual would be between 0.2 -1.0mg/L, depending on the quality of the source water. This can be obtained by adding 8 grams (one dessert spoon) of calcium hypochlorite (granular) at 65% strength per 10,000 litres giving 0.5 mg/L of chlorine. Alternatively, if sodium hypochlorite (liquid) is used add 40 mL at 12.5% strength per 10,000 litres of water to give 0.5 mg/L of chlorine. (Free chlorine will be less depending on turbidity, colour etc and should be checked.)

3. WATER TANK AND VEHICLE

Ideally, the water tank should be used only for the transport of potable water. If this is not possible, then at a minimum the tank must not be used for transport of effluent (treated or otherwise), petroleum products, or other potentially hazardous materials that may be prejudicial to health.

Where the tank has been used for transport of non-hazardous materials other than potable water, the tank must be cleaned and disinfected prior to filling with potable water. First, the tank should be physically cleaned inside, flushed out and then filled with water and chlorinated to at least 5.0 mg/L free chlorine for a minimum of 30 minutes. This can be achieved using 76 grams of calcium hypochlorite at 65% strength per 10,000 litres of water or if sodium hypochlorite is used 400 mL at 12.5% strength per 10,000 litres of water.

All tanks constructed of mild steel should be coated or lined with a material that complies with *AS/NZS 4020:1999 Products for use in contact with drinking water*.

The vehicle tank and apparatus should be submitted once every twelve months for inspection by Council.

4. HOSE

Hoses must be made of food grade material. Hoses and fittings must be capped or stored in a dust proof container during transport or when not being used.

Where the tank has been used for transport of non-hazardous materials other than potable water, the hose must be cleaned, flushed out and then disinfected by filling with water and chlorinated to at least 5.0 mg/L free chlorine for a minimum of 30 minutes.

5. STANDPIPES AND HYDRANT BOXES

Fixed standpipes must have an air gap to prevent backflow into the reticulated supply.

Hydrant boxes should be self draining, mounted above ground level and not collect surface runoff.

Any tanks being filled from a reticulated supply via a removable standpipe must have a backflow prevention device that complies with the *NSW Code of Practice for Plumbing and Drainage*.

Removable standpipes should be flushed if the hydrant box is full of water, to discard any contaminated water.

6. LOG BOOKS

A water carter must keep a log book in each vehicle to record information of deliveries. Details must include the following:

- All dates of extraction and delivery
- Source of water
- Location of extraction
- Customers name and delivery address
- Volume delivered
- When the tank was last cleaned and materials transported
- Free chlorine level.

7. REGISTER OF WATER CARTERS

A record of water carters that draw from the reticulated water supply must be kept by the Local Council.

Details should include:

- Name of owner
- Name of business
- Contact details for owner of the business
- Details of water carting vehicles, drivers, make, model, registration, tank volume, type of tank eg temporary mounted tanks, etc
- Date of last inspection of each vehicle.

For further information contact your local Public Health Unit. (Under *Health* in the white pages or at www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/phus/phus.html).

Robyn Kruk
Director-General