Project Approval Requirements for Drinking Water Systems
– Permits to Construct or Alter –

PURPOSE

Approval is required prior to proceeding with the construction of a new public or semi-public water system, or with the alteration of an existing public or semi-public water system. Permit requirements are set out in The Drinking Water Safety Act and a supporting regulation, the Drinking Water Safety Regulation MR 40/2007. The Act and regulations can be viewed at: www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater.

This information bulletin provides guidance to water system owners and consultants on the approval process for permits to construct or alter water systems in Manitoba.

Are all water systems impacted by the permit requirements of the regulations?

Similar to other provinces, water systems in Manitoba are classified into three categories:

- A public water system is a system with 15 or more service connections (ex: building connections, standpipes), or a system that has been designated as a public water system by the Office of Drinking Water.
- A private water system is a system that supplies water to a single home or a system that has been designated as a private water system by the Office of Drinking Water.
- A semi-public water system is anything in between and may include facilities with their own water supply systems that provide drinking water to the public such as hospitals, schools and restaurants, or small water systems with less than 15 but more than one connection.

Permit requirements do not apply to private water systems.

When is a construction permit required?

A permit must be obtained from the Office of Drinking Water prior to starting construction of a new public or semi-public water system or altering (ex: modifying, upgrading or expanding) an existing system. The Permit specifies terms and conditions under which the project can proceed; additional recommendations may be provided in an approval letter accompanying the Permit. The types of projects requiring a permit typically include:

- Construction of a new water system
- Alterations or upgrades to water treatment systems
- Construction of inground water storage reservoirs
- Construction of booster pumping, storage or rechlorination stations
- Construction of potable bulk fill stations
- Major extensions or redesigns to distribution systems
- Development of new water sources (ex: a new well or a new surface water supply)
In some cases, a proposed project may be exempt from these requirements due to its scope, for example, in-kind replacement of existing equipment or maintenance activities.

In some cases, a proposed alteration may require approval but is considered a minor alteration where issuance of a permit is not required. For such projects, confirmation will typically be required that the design meets accepted standards including water-sewer main separation requirements. Typical examples include short watermain extensions (ex: less than 300m), installation of a second water supply well into the same aquifer, or installation of an emergency generator. Submission of engineering design information may be required depending on the complexity of the project.

The Office of Drinking Water can be contacted for advice on the need to obtain a permit during the project planning phase so delays are not encountered in later project phases.

Once a permit is issued, it may be amended by the Office of Drinking Water. Water system owners can also apply for an amendment to a permit condition by submitting the required application form.

How do I go about obtaining a Permit to Construct or Alter?

If your project requires a permit, a complete permit application must be submitted. The application form lists required supporting material that must accompany the application to avoid delays. Permit forms can be obtained from the Office of Drinking Water or our website: http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/odw/req-info/forms/index.html.

What supporting material must generally accompany a permit application?

The overall objective for water system design and operation should be producing and distributing drinking water that consistently meets provincial health-based standards specified in the Drinking Water Quality Standards Regulation MR 41/2007 with a goal of also meeting aesthetic objectives in Health Canada’s Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality (GCDWQ). The water system must also have the capacity to meet water demands without developing water pressure or water quality issues.

For public water system projects and some semi-public water system projects, engineering design documents including drawings must be included in a permit application. Drawings must be sealed by a professional engineer registered to practice in the province of Manitoba. The drawings must include the location and details for all proposed water supply, treatment, storage, pumping and distribution works. The drawings must also show the location of any nearby wastewater infrastructure or other potential sources of contamination. The design brief must include a project description, summary of basic design data, project schedule and location map if not included in the drawings. Additional information is required where water supply or water treatment works are proposed. A description of how water service will be maintained during construction work on an existing water system must also be provided.

The Office of Drinking Water applies the Recommended Standards for Water Works (commonly known as The Ten State Standards), CSA and AWWA standards, and provincial standards and guidelines. The Ten State Standards are widely used in North American jurisdictions as the basis for water system reviews and design guidelines. A permit application must include a statement by the engineer that the design was in general conformance with these standards along with an explanation or justification for any significant deviations from these standards which may impact the protection of public health.
Are there other regulatory requirements that must be met?

Project proponents are encouraged to contact the Water Licensing Branch of Manitoba Water Stewardship and the Environmental Assessment and Licensing Branch of Manitoba Conservation early in a project to determine if a Water Rights Licence or an Environment Act Licence or approval will be required. In addition, Manitoba Conservation oversees the Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation MR 83/2003. Contact may be required with other agencies or organizations, for example, where permission is required for a utility crossing or stream crossing, or to ensure compliance with plumbing code, workplace safety and health requirements and local bylaws.

As of January 1, 2011, Manitoba Conservation’s Environmental Assessment and Licensing Branch is responsible for review of wastewater collection system projects previously submitted to the Office of Drinking Water to meet requirements under The Public Health Act.

What steps are involved in obtaining a permit?

In general, public water system project proponents and engineers should follow the steps outlined. Semi-public water system project proponents should discuss their project with the Office of Drinking Water to ensure regulatory requirements are met. The following sequence of steps contains information that may be relevant to semi-public water system projects.

1) Contact the Office of Drinking Water to discuss your plans early on in project planning. Office of Drinking Water staff can provide information and advice. Contact may also be required with other municipal, provincial or federal government agencies.

2) Review all applicable regulations and requirements. It is important that project proponents are familiar with the legislation affecting drinking water systems.

3) Consider alternatives. Owning and operating a water system is a significant responsibility and involves ongoing diligence and investment to ensure the delivery of safe drinking water.

4) Engage the services of a qualified professional engineer to oversee the proposed work.

5) Where a project may involve a non-traditional technology, a major alteration to a water supply or treatment system, an alternative disinfection strategy or a significant deviation from accepted standards, the Office of Drinking Water should be contacted as early as possible. The Office of Drinking Water may request additional documentation to support the discussion such as a pre-design report, Environment Act proposal, or technical note.

6) Submit a completed permit application form and all supporting material as far in advance of tendering as possible. The proponent or their authorized representative (ex: engineer) can make the submission. Depending on the complexity of the project and the completeness of the submission, the review process may take up to several months. Although approval reviews are typically conducted on a first-come first-served basis, the Office of Drinking Water will try to accommodate project schedules.

7) Comply with any requests from the Office of Drinking Water. Office of Drinking Water staff may request more information or carry out an inspection to confirm the project will conform to applicable standards, generally accepted design practices, and provincial regulations and guidelines. Once any issues are satisfactorily addressed, the Office of Drinking Water will issue an approval letter and permit to the engineer and owner(s).
8) Once a permit has been issued, construction can begin. Comply with all permit conditions. If significant changes are required before or during construction or significant delays are expected, inform the Office of Drinking Water. A permit amendment may be required.

9) Notify the Office of Drinking Water, and submit the required post-construction report as directed in the permit. In some cases, approval is required before the new or altered works are placed into operation to confirm successful commissioning.

**OFFICE OF DRINKING WATER CONTACT INFORMATION**

Project approval information including application forms is available on the Office of Drinking Water website: [www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater](http://www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater). Questions on the permit process and requests for project-specific approval requirements should be directed to:

Approvals Unit  
Office of Drinking Water  
1007 Century Street  
Winnipeg MB R3H 0W4  
Phone: 204-945-5936 or 204-945-5949  
Fax: 204-945-1365  
Email: Kim.Barlishen@gov.mb.ca or James.Stibbard@gov.mb.ca

*Water system owners can contact their regional Drinking Water Officer with questions on regulatory requirements and compliance deadlines for their water system or to request forms.*