



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

IMPROVING READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

Drinking Water Quality – Public Notifications

What is a Public Notification (PN)?

Public water system (PWS) operators test drinking water regularly for approximately 90 contaminants. The monitoring ensures identification of regulated contaminants at levels which may pose a risk to human health. Unfortunately, water quality can sometimes change. Despite the efforts of water suppliers, problems with drinking water can and do occur. When problems arise, consumers have a right to know what happened and what they need to do.

A public notification (PN) is a legally required action that operators of PWS must take to notify persons served by the PWS of violations of Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requirements. The PN rule is part of the SDWA. In 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised the existing PN rule to match the form, manner and timing of the PNs to the relative risk to human health. The rule ensures that consumers will know if there is a problem with their drinking water. A PWS must notify its customers when:

- They violate EPA or state drinking water regulations, or
- They provide drinking water that may pose a risk to consumer's health.

For Navy and Marine Corps CONUS installations, OPNAV-M5090.1 and MCO P5090.2 direct the operators of installation PWS to comply with the PN rule and notify water system customers when EPA or state drinking water regulations are violated. For overseas Navy installations, CNIC-M5090.1 directs the PWS operator to issue a PN if an installation water system does not meet the required primary drinking water standards.

What are the requirements of a PN?

There are 10 required elements in a public notice. Notices must contain:

- A description of the violation that occurred, including the contaminant(s) of concern, and the contaminant level(s);
- When the violation or situation occurred;
- The potential health effects (including standard required language);
- The population at risk, including subpopulations vulnerable if exposed to the contaminant in their drinking water;
- Whether alternate water supplies need to be used;
- What the water system is doing to correct the problem;
- Actions consumers can take;
- When the system expects a resolution to the problem;
- How to contact the water system for more information; and
- Language encouraging broader distribution of the notice.



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Notification Tiers

The EPA specifies three categories, or tiers, of public notification. The delivery timeframe of the PN depends on what tier a violation or situation falls into. Each tier has different required methods to deliver the notice depending on the water system type. The following table summarizes the differences between PN tiers:

Public Notification: The 3 Tiers of Public Notification

	Required Distribution Time
Tier 1 (Immediate Notice)	Any time a situation occurs where there is the potential for human health to be immediately impacted, water suppliers have 24 hours to notify people who may drink the water about the situation.
Tier 2 (Notice as soon as possible)	Any time a water system provides water with levels of a contaminant that exceeds EPA or state standards or that hasn't been treated properly, but that doesn't pose an immediate risk to human health, the water system must notify its customers as soon as possible, but within 30 days of the violation.
Tier 3 (Annual notice)	When water systems violate a drinking water standard that does not have a direct impact on human health (for example, failing to take a required sample on time) the water supplier has up to a year to provide a notice of this situation to its customers.

Navy Preventive Medicine Advice and Consultation

OPNAV-M5090.1 and BUMEDINST 6240.10C require the local (i.e. at the installation level) Preventive Medicine Authority (PMA), as advised by the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) to provide public health advice and consultation to installation Commanding Officers in the preparation of PNs and Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs).

Submit your questions to: usn.hampton-roads.navmcpublthcenpors.list.nmcphe-drinkingwater@mail.mil

For more information on Drinking Water:

Learn more: [General Information and Facts \(navy.mil\)](#);

Learn more: [Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center - Home](#)

Learn more: [Public Notification Rule | Drinking Water Requirements for States and Public Water Systems | US EPA](#)