



# NAVY AND MARINE CORPS FORCE HEALTH PROTECTION COMMAND IMPROVING READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

## RESPONDING TO DRINKING WATER CONCERNS ON U.S. NAVY SHIPS

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The U.S. Navy is committed to the health and safety of all Navy and Marine Corps personnel serving aboard U.S. Navy ships. This commitment includes supplying safe drinking (potable) water for all consumptive uses (e.g., drinking, showering, and/or oral hygiene) to personnel while aboard Navy ships. This factsheet is intended to provide Commanding Officers (COs) resources and contact information in the event there are drinking water concerns aboard a U.S. Navy ship. See the Navy Marine Corps Force Health Protection Command (NMCFHPC)'s *Primer: Drinking Water Investigations on U.S. Navy Ships* for a more detailed overview on how to respond to drinking water issues aboard Navy ships and how to conduct a drinking water investigation.

### WHEN TO CONDUCT A DRINKING WATER INVESTIGATION

COs should conduct a drinking water investigation if there are any drinking water quality concerns aboard a Navy ship. Water quality concerns may include:

- Crew observing unusual color, sheen, odor, and/or taste associated with drinking water;
- Crew reporting illness (e.g., stomach pains, headaches, cramping) after consuming drinking water; and/or
- A known or suspected release of contamination (e.g., fuel, sewage) to the drinking water supply.

### HOW DRINKING WATER IS CONTAMINATED

Drinking water supplied on Navy ships can be impacted by contamination in seawater that is drawn into the ships for treatment, leaks/spills/releases to the ship's drinking water system, and/or contamination in the drinking water supplied from a shore-based supplier.



### INITIAL RESPONSE FOR COMMANDING OFFICERS

COs (and their Engineering and Medical Departments) should work with their TYCOM and the NMCFHPC to develop a site-specific plan. COs should follow the steps in Figure 1.

### SECURE IMPACTED WATER

If there is a known or suspected release of contamination that impacts the drinking water system on a Navy ship, COs should secure the impacted water and no longer use it for drinking water purposes.

### INFORM ALL CREW MEMBERS

COs should notify ship's crew about the suspected drinking water contamination. If necessary, crew members should be advised to stop consuming drinking water and be provided an alternative source of drinking water (e.g., bottled water).

### NOTIFY CHAIN-OF-COMMAND

COs should document the event including specific information regarding when the drinking water incident might have occurred and if the issue is still on-going. Report all drinking water concerns up the Chain-of-Command.

### CONTACT NMCFHPC

The NMCFHPC will support COs/TYCOMs in identifying drinking water concerns, risk communication, developing a SAP, determining if drinking water is safe for consumption, and identifying next steps.

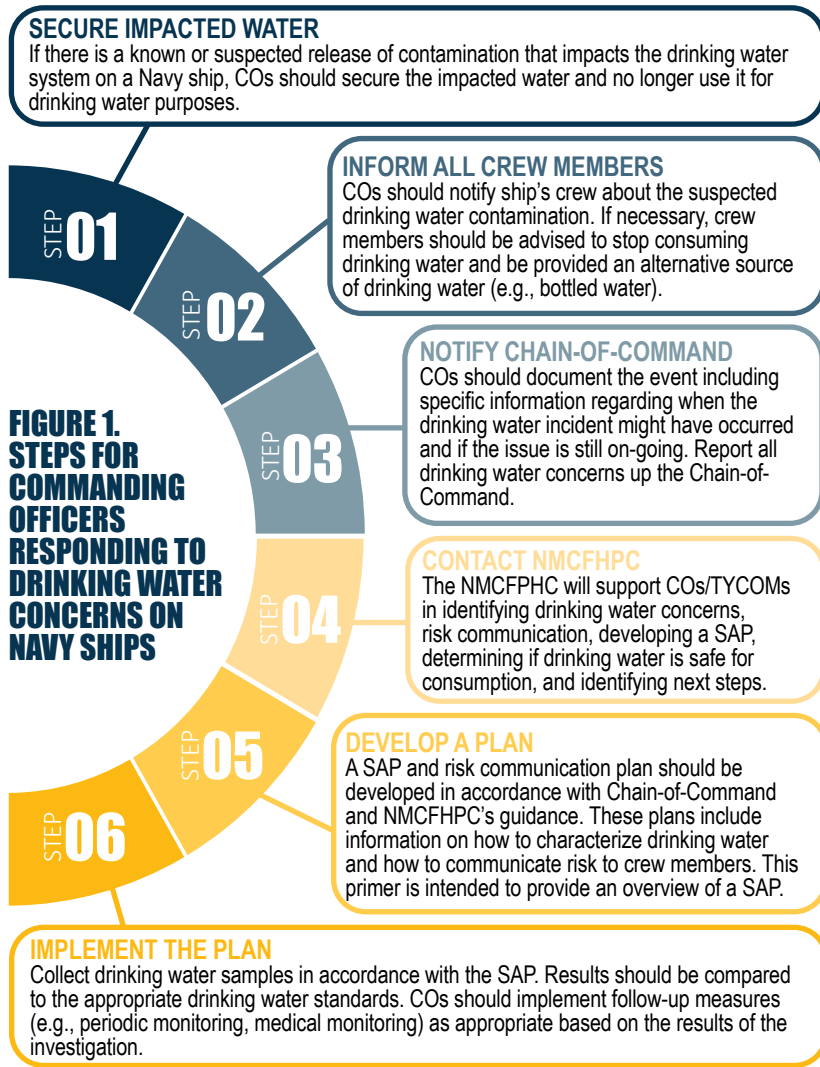
### DEVELOP A PLAN

A SAP and risk communication plan should be developed in accordance with Chain-of-Command and NMCFHPC's guidance. These plans include information on how to characterize drinking water and how to communicate risk to crew members. This primer is intended to provide an overview of a SAP.

### IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

Collect drinking water samples in accordance with the SAP. Results should be compared to the appropriate drinking water standards. COs should implement follow-up measures (e.g., periodic monitoring, medical monitoring) as appropriate based on the results of the investigation.

**FIGURE 1.  
STEPS FOR  
COMMANDING  
OFFICERS  
RESPONDING TO  
DRINKING WATER  
CONCERNS ON  
NAVY SHIPS**



### CONTACT INFORMATION

If there is a known or suspected drinking water issue while aboard a Navy ship, please contact your TYCOM and the NMCFHPC at (757) 953-0700. We are committed to the health and safety for all Navy and Marine Corps personnel and their families. Our mission is to provide leadership and expertise to ensure mission readiness through disease prevention and health promotion in support of the National Military Strategy.