

Director's Directions

Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002

Minimum Requirements for Operational Plans

Municipal Drinking Water Systems

March 2026

Made under the authority of subsection 15 (1) of the Act

Preamble:

These directions provide instructions respecting the preparation and content of operational plans prepared by owners of municipal residential drinking water systems pursuant to subsection 16 (2) of the [Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002](#) (SDWA).

The directions should be considered together with the [Accreditation Protocol for operating authorities](#) as the operational plans prepared under these directions will affect accreditation options for operating authorities. For ease of comparison, the headings in Table One of Schedule B to these directions reflect accreditation options. The Accreditation Protocol should be referenced for further information on the accreditation of operating authorities.

1.0 Overview

1.0.1 These Directions set out the requirements for operational plans required under the SDWA.

2.0 Definitions

2.0.1 The definitions set out in Schedule A to these directions, in addition to the definitions in subsection 2 (1) of the SDWA and the definitions in subsection 1 (1) of the [Drinking Water Systems regulation, O. Reg. 170/03](#), apply for the purposes of these directions.

3.0 Operational Plans - Content Requirements

3.0.1 Each subject system comprising the municipal residential drinking water system shall have operational plans.

3.0.2 The operational plans required by section 3.0.1, when considered in their entirety, shall apply to all parts of a municipal residential drinking water system.

3.0.3 The operational plan may incorporate by reference such other documents as may be deemed necessary by the system owner or operating authority. Documents incorporated in this way will be considered part of the operational plan and shall be maintained and retained along with the operational plan.

3.0.4 A single operational plan may be prepared for and apply to multiple subject systems that have the same owner, where the systems are operated by the same operating authority.

3.0.5 A single operational plan may be prepared for and apply to multiple subject systems that have different owners where:

1. the systems have the same operating authority;
2. the systems are physically connected and operated as if they were a single system; and
3. all requirements in the Drinking Water Quality Management Standard that refer to “owner” are interpreted to mean the owners of all subject systems for which the operational plan has been prepared.

3.1 Operational Plans

- 3.1.1 Operational plans prepared for a subject system for the purposes of complying with a requirement of the SDWA, shall contain the information necessary to conform with the PLAN requirements of the DWQMS elements marked as “Yes” in Table One of Schedule B, under the column titled “Full Scope”.

3.2 Transitional

- 3.2.1 Despite section 3.1.1, if a subject system is operated by an operating authority accredited as Limited Scope - Transitional, the operational plans for the subject system shall contain the information necessary to ensure conformity with the PLAN requirements of the DWQMS elements identified as “Yes” in Table One of Schedule B, under the column titled “Limited Scope – Transitional”.

3.3 Requirements for all Operational Plans

- 3.3.1 In addition to any other requirement of these directions, all operational plans shall contain the following:
 1. a procedure for version control of the operational plans that ensures:
 - a. a version number and/or revision date is recorded on every page of any uncontrolled copy of the plans;
 - b. a version number and/or revision date is recorded on or otherwise embedded in every controlled copy of the plans;
 - c. where the operational plans are stored and maintained as separate files, an up-to-date list or index is maintained of all documents that are part of the operational plan, including the document version numbers and dates.
 2. a title that generally describes the municipal drinking water system(s) to which the operational plans apply; and
 3. a completed copy of the Subject System Description Form in Schedule C that includes the name of the municipal residential drinking water system(s), municipal drinking water licence number(s), and if applicable the operational subsystem, to which the plans apply.
- 3.3.2 Operational plans that are required to be submitted to the Director shall:
 1. be submitted electronically, as a single file using the portable document format (“.pdf”) or in another format acceptable to the Director; and

2. if the operating authority in charge of the subject system to which the operational plans apply is not the owner:
 - a. be copied to the operating authority, if the operational plans are submitted to the Director by the owner; and
 - b. be copied to the owner, if the operational plans are submitted to the Director by the operating authority.

4.0 Retention of Operational Plans

- 4.0.1 Operational plans that were the subject of an audit by an auditor for the accreditation body shall be retained for a minimum of 10 years by the owner of the operational plans and the accredited operating authority for the subject system to which the operational plans apply.

5.0 Public Disclosure of Operational Plans

- 5.0.1 Each of the following owners of a subject system shall make the operational plans for the subject system available for viewing by the public:
 1. a municipality;
 2. a municipal service board established under the *Municipal Act, 2001* or a city board established under the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*; and
 3. a corporation established under sections 9, 10 and 11 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* in accordance with section 203 of that Act or under sections 7 and 8 of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* in accordance with sections 148 and 154 of that Act.
- 5.0.2 Where section 5.0.1 applies, the owner shall make the operational plans available for viewing by the public at the principal office of the owner and/or on a website that is accessible to the public.
- 5.0.3 Operational plans owned by a person other than an owner listed in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of section 5.0.1, shall be made available for viewing by the public at the principal place of business of the person that is located within the area served by the subject system to which the operational plans relate and/or on a website that is accessible to the public.
- 5.0.4 Despite sections 5.0.1 and 5.0.3, the owner of a subject system shall not make any portion of the operational plans for that subject system available for viewing by the public where the disclosure of that portion:
 1. could reasonably be expected to seriously threaten the safety or health of an individual or to threaten the safety and quality of the drinking water;
 2. could prejudice significantly the competitive position or interfere significantly with the contractual or other negotiations of a person, group of persons, or organization; or
 3. contains trade secrets or financial, commercial, scientific or technical information that belongs to the owner or the operating authority and has monetary value or potential monetary value.
- 5.0.5 The operational plans referred to in sections 5.0.1 and 5.0.3 shall be:

1. Where made available in hard copy, the most current version of the operational plans for the subject system;
2. Where made available on a website that is accessible to the public, updated on the website at regular intervals and to reflect any major revisions to the plan(s).

5.0.6 No person subject to these directions shall, without the consent of the owner, disclose the operational plans for the subject system.

5.0.7 The requirements of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Personal Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M. 56 and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Personal Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990 c. F. 31 prevail over the requirements of these directions.

6.0 Transition

6.0.1 Operational plans prepared for a subject system shall be updated to meet the requirements of these directions no later than December 31, 2026.

Schedule A

Definitions

“accreditation body” means a person designated or established as an accreditation body under Part IV of the SDWA.

“Director” means a Director appointed for the purposes of subsections 16 (2) or 44 (1) of the SDWA, as the circumstances require.

“Drinking Water Quality Management Standard” or “DWQMS” means the Quality Management Standard for drinking water systems approved under section 21 of the SDWA.

“municipal residential drinking water system” means a large municipal residential system or a small municipal residential system as defined in O. Reg. 170/03.

“operational subsystem” means a part of a municipal residential drinking water system operated by a single operating authority and designated by the owner within operational plans as being an operational subsystem.

“principal office” means a location that is determined by the system owner and is generally frequented by members of the public.

“SDWA” means the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*, S.O. 2002, c. 32, as amended.

“subject system” has the same meaning as “subject system” as defined in the Drinking Water Quality Management Standard, as amended.

Schedule B

Operational Plans Content Requirements

Table One: Operational Plans Content Requirements

DWQMS Element	Limited Scope – Transitional	Full Scope
1. Quality Management System		Yes
2. Quality Management System Policy		Yes
3. Commitment and Endorsement	Yes	Yes
4. Quality Management System Representative	Yes	Yes
5. Document and Records Control		Yes
6. Drinking water System	Yes	Yes
7. Risk Assessment		Yes
8. Risk Assessment Outcomes		Yes
9. Organizational Structure, Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities	Yes	Yes
10. Competencies		Yes
11. Personnel Coverage	Yes	Yes
12. Communications		Yes
13. Essential Supplies and Services	Yes	Yes
14. Review and Provision of Infrastructure		Yes
15. Infrastructure Maintenance, Rehabilitation and Renewal		Yes
16. Sampling, Testing and Monitoring	Yes	Yes
17. Measurement and Recording Equipment Calibration and Maintenance	Yes	Yes
18. Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
19. Internal Audits		Yes
20. Management Review		Yes
21. Continual Improvement		Yes

Schedule C

Subject System Description Form				
Municipal Residential Drinking Water System				
Owner of Municipal Residential Drinking Water System: ¹				
Subject Systems				
Name of Drinking Water System ²	Licence Number	Name of Operational Subsystems (if Applicable) ³	Name of Operating Authority ⁴	DWS Number(s) ⁵
Add attachments if there are additional Drinking Water Systems or Operational Subsystems				
Contact Information for Questions Regarding the Operational Plan				
Name	Title	Phone No(s).	Email Address	
Primary:				
Alternate:				

Note: a fill-able electronic copy of this form is available in the Central Forms Repository ([form number 012-2153](#))