

Use of Non-Reticulated Water in Food Businesses

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What is non-reticulated water?

Non-reticulated water is any water supply not piped into a business by either a water utility or local council. It includes:

- rainwater
- groundwater (eg. bore water) and
- surface water.

What are my legal requirements?

Under the Food Standards Code, food businesses must use potable (drinkable) water for activities conducted on their food premises. Where businesses do not have access to a potable water source, they must be able to demonstrate that the water they use is safe.

Hazards of using non-reticulated water

The hazards of non-reticulated water will depend on your water source. There may be disease-causing micro-organisms present, such as *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, viruses and *E. coli*. Also, it may contain harmful chemicals.

How do I manage my private water supply?

To manage your private water supply you should ensure:

- water is collected from a suitable source;
- the equipment used to collect and store your water is suitable and well maintained; and
- the water is adequately treated to make it safe and its quality monitored.

Important issues to consider

- Any roofs or gutters used to collect rainwater should be kept clean and free from leaves, bird dropping etc.
- The first water collected during a rainfall should be discarded to reduce the amount of micro-organisms entering the tank.

- All collection and storage equipment should be suitable for that use. Pests and rodents should not be able to enter the equipment. You should consult a reputable supplier of water tanks, pipes pumps, etc.
- How the equipment is positioned and designed is also important in avoiding contamination. Again, it is important to consult a reputable equipment supplier.
- Surface and groundwater is greatly affected by the surrounding environment. You should do a stocktake of the surrounding area to ensure there are no potential microbial or chemical contaminants.
- You may need to consider water treatment to remove solids and micro-organisms (ie. filter to remove sediment and sterilise).

Further information

NSW Health is currently developing guidelines for businesses with a private water supply. These should be available in late 2006.

In the meantime, a guide to non-potable water in food business has been published by the Department of Human Services, Victoria (<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/downloads/nonpotablewater-guide.pdf>). This guide includes information on chlorination of water and other sterilisation methods.

enHealth Council also has guidelines on rainwater tanks (http://enhealth.nphp.gov.au/council/pubs/documents/rainwater_tanks.pdf).

Your local council or Public Health Unit may also be able to provide you with further advice.

Authority contact

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