



Community and Health Services Department
Public Health Branch

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health
Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: May 8, 2013

RE: **Update on Risk Categorization of High Risk Small Drinking Water Systems**

At its February 8, 2012 meeting, Community and Health Services Committee received a presentation on the risk categorization of small drinking water systems. This memo provides an update on subsequent assessments of high risk small drinking water systems.

Small drinking water systems are classified as high, moderate or low risk based on various factors that affect water safety

Small drinking water systems are non-residential systems and seasonal residential systems serving facilities such as churches, motels/hotels, community halls, arenas, trailer parks, and campgrounds. There are 314 small drinking water systems in York Region.

In 2008, responsibility for small drinking water systems was transferred from the Ministry of the Environment to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Public health units undertook risk assessments of these systems using a provincially-developed risk categorization tool. The tool, an algorithmic matrix in which each component carries a weighted value, takes into account the many factors that affect water safety such as:

- Source water (well, lake)
- Sample history (laboratory-confirmed bacteriological water results)
- Treatment/distribution (UV, chlorination)
- Operations (complexity of system, training)
- Users (access to drinking water)

Based on risk assessment results, small drinking water systems were categorized as high, moderate or low risk.

Most small drinking water systems initially classified as high risk have now reduced their risk level

The Public Health Branch's initial risk assessments identified 53 small drinking water systems in the Region as high risk, accounting for about 20% of all systems. However, in many cases, systems that addressed specific factors listed above could change risk level.

In 2012, subsequent routine risk assessments were conducted for all small drinking water systems that had initially been categorized as high risk. Of these, 33 were re-categorized as low risk, 9 were re-categorized as moderate risk, and 9 remained as high risk.¹ New directives were issued to owners/operators of all small drinking water systems that underwent risk assessments in 2012 to outline requirements that must be followed (e.g. related to sampling, record keeping, treatment equipment, etc).

York Region Public Health inspections of all small drinking water systems will continue as mandated by the Province.

Adelina Urbanski
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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¹ Two small drinking water systems originally classified as high risk have since closed.