



Secrecy is Toxic

You have the right to know

CRTK Fact Sheet

Accessing Information Under the Safe Water Drinking Act

What information does the Act provide?

Ontario's Safe Drinking Water Act sets forth legal reporting requirements for owners and operators of drinking water systems. The following reports and documents must be made available on site at each location so that interested persons may read them on request, free of charge, during normal business hours.

- Every required water test result (not older than two years).
- Every approval and order issued (not older than two years) that applies to your drinking water system and that is still in effect, if it was issued after January 1, 2001.
- Every annual report prepared for the past two years.
- A copy of every Engineering Evaluation Report for the past two years.

The Act makes it mandatory to report adverse test results and to post warning notices if they are not in compliance with the testing requirements or if the necessary corrective action has not been carried out. These warning notices have to be posted in prominent locations to alert users.

How do I access information under the Act?

You have to contact your local municipality or whoever supplies your drinking water and ask where you go to view the documents of interest. If the owner's office is not at a reasonably convenient location, then the report must be available at another location that is convenient. If the system serves a municipality, the information must be available at the office of the municipality, whether or not the municipality owns the system.

The annual reports must be given without charge to anyone who requests a copy. If a drinking water system serves more than 10,000 people, the owner must also post the annual reports on a website on the Internet.

What information is not accessible under the Act?

These rules do not apply to non-residential (except those serving vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly and the infirmed) and seasonal residential drinking water systems. Private wells are exempt. As well, certain non-municipal year-round residential drinking water systems where the source is ground water and the system meets acceptable risk-based standards are exempt from the Act.

Why is the information provided by the Act useful?

This Regulation was developed in response to the Walkerton Inquiry. It was designed to protect the public from management oversights in the regulation/ testing of water and is relatively new. Accessing information under the Act can help communities find out what contaminants are in your drinking water, monitor the levels of contaminants and be notified when the water system is not meeting water quality standards.

For more information:

Resources for the Environment and the Law- Ontario Safe Drinking Water Act 2002 and Regulations FAQs (January 2004)

<http://www.ecolawinfo.org/WATER%20FAQs/Water%20Quality%20and%20Enviro%20Protect/SafDriWat.htm> Accessed January 24, 2006