Safety Bulletin

Safe Drinking Water

On October 12, 2021, Iqaluit City Council declared a state of local emergency due to the possibility of petroleum hydrocarbons at the Iqaluit water treatment plant. The Government of Nunavut is advising Iqalummiut not to consume tap water for drinking or cooking, until further notice.

Employers must ensure that potable (safe to drink) water is readily available in the workplace or make alternate arrangements to ensure that employees have access to safe drinking water.

What are employers' responsibilities under the *Safety Act* and *OHS Regulations*?

- An employer shall provide an adequate supply of clean and safe drinking water that is easy for workers to access.
- If the supply of drinking water at a work site is not piped, an employer shall (a) provide drinking water in suitable covered containers; (b) protect the drinking water from contamination; and (c) change the drinking water as often as necessary to ensure that it is clean and safe to drink.
- An employer shall provide an adequate supply of clean cups near each supply of drinking water unless the drinking water is supplied in an upward jet.
- Clearly mark the supply of drinking water with a sign that says "Drinking Water" or by another visual means.

- If there is a risk of substantial contamination of a worker or of a worker's clothing from corrosive or other harmful or hazardous substances, an employer shall provide and maintain an approved and readily accessible means of bathing or showering the worker in lukewarm water.
- If there is a risk to the eyes of a worker from corrosive or other hazardous substances, an employer shall provide and maintain, at readily accessible locations, approved equipment to flush the eyes of the worker with lukewarm water or another appropriate liquid.

Personal Washing

An employer shall provide and maintain for the use of workers, suitable facilities for personal washing that:

- are located near each toilet at a work site
- have a supply of clean hot and cold water or warm water, soap and clean towels or other suitable means of cleaning and drying
- Water used in personal washing must be potable, which means safe to drink.

Relevant Legislation

- OHS Regulations Section 76 (1)(2)
- OHS Regulations Section 80 (1)-(5)
- OHS Regulations Section 319
- OHS Regulations 320





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What are workers' rights and responsibilities?

All workers have the right to know (hazards, safety concerns), the right to participate (safety discussions, meetings) and the right to refuse unsafe work (unsafe conditions at your workplace).

If you are concerned that the water at your workplace is not safe, please work together with your employer to mitigate the risk.

How can employers and workers report unsafe work?

Report a serious workplace incident or injury by calling the WSCC at 1-800-661-0792

Report unsafe work online using our Report Unsafe Work service on WSCC Connect.

General Guidance

Keep informed and up-to-date on the advice from the City of Igaluit and the Government of Nunavut Department of Health on this issue. Current advisories include:

- Do not drink water directly from the pipes or taps
- Do not use tap water for cooking at home or cafeterias
- Boil water from the water trucks and fill stations, and water gathered from the river
- Use sanitary wipes for any unsanitary conditions that may arise
- Place hand sanitizers at entrances and exits.

