

Purpose of this leaflet

Article 14 of the EC (Drinking Water) (No.2) Regulations, 2007, S.I. No. 278 of 2007 requires Local Authorities to provide owners and users of unregulated private water supplies with information about the risks of contamination and with advice about what they can do to protect their supplies and keep them safe.



Why is this leaflet needed?

This leaflet explains what an unregulated private water supply is, how to protect it, and reduce the risk of contamination. It also describes the different types of unregulated private water supplies and what may contaminate them. It is essential that you keep your private water supply safe from contamination to protect you and your family's health.

What is an unregulated private water supply?

An unregulated private water supply is any supply that is not provided by or regulated by a Sanitary Authority. It is any private supply that provides less than 10m³/day of water or serves less than 50 people and does **not** supply water to a public or commercial activity, such as a restaurant or bed and breakfast i.e., a supply to normal residential properties exclusively.

What is the problem?

Safe drinking water is essential for good health. Unregulated private water supplies can pose a risk to health unless they are properly protected and treated. They may become contaminated with microbes, such as bacteria, or chemicals. Some of these are harmless, but others may cause serious illness, particularly in vulnerable people such as the elderly, the very young, pregnant women and sick people.

You will not be able to tell without sampling and analysis whether your water supply is safe because the contamination may not change the taste, smell or colour of your water. If in doubt about the quality of any supply, you should seek advice from your Local Authority or the Health Services Executive.

Types of unregulated private water supplies

Springs, wells and boreholes

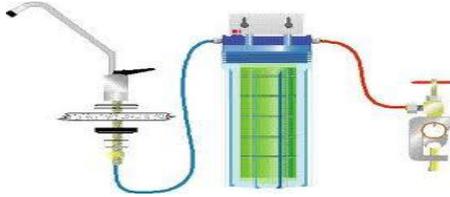
Springs, wells and boreholes may get contaminated where:

- The spring emerges from the ground
- The water collects in the borehole or well

Springs and shallow wells that draw water from close to the surface are more likely to be contaminated than springs, wells and boreholes that draw water from deep underground. Groundwater can pick up nitrate or pesticides from their use on crops. It can also pick up pathogens from the faeces of grazing animals or the spreading of manure or slurry or from wastewater treatment systems. Consumption of this water may pose a risk to health.

Streams, rivers, ponds and lakes

The quality of water from streams, rivers, ponds and lakes will generally not be as good as that from springs, wells and boreholes. The quality will vary depending on weather conditions and activities in the catchment**. These waters are more likely to be contaminated, particularly from bacteria, at times of high rainfall and warm weather. Water that runs across land into streams, rivers, ponds or lakes can be contaminated from various sources such as soil, crops and faeces of farm animals, wild animals and birds.



Measures to protect your supply from pollution

1. Find out about your supply

- Where is the source of your drinking water and what type of source is it – spring, well, borehole, stream/river, pond or lake?
- Is your supply treated in any way – and if so, is the treatment equipment in good order and serviced regularly?
- Who is responsible for the maintenance of your supply – if this is not clear, consider reaching an agreement with other users.
- Identify and assess all the risks associated with your supply, i.e. risks in the catchment, at the water treatment system and in the supply pipework and take steps to minimise these risks.

2. Keep your supply safe

- Inspect all parts of your supply regularly to check that it is in good condition and has not been interfered with or damaged. This means checking at the source of the supply, including the source catchment area, any collection chamber/reservoir, the

treatment plant/system, and any pipework associated with your supply.

- In ALL cases, maintain regular and accurate records of all inspections, repairs, calibrations, etc. carried out on your supply.

For supplies from springs, wells and boreholes

- Check that the source is adequately protected to stop surface water getting into your supply, particularly at times of heavy rainfall. There should be no ponding of water near the source.
- Wellheads should be constructed so as to ensure that surface water and shallow ground water, which are at risk of pollution, cannot enter the well.
- Ensure that the top of any well, tank or chamber is above ground level to prevent inflow of water from the surrounding land.
- Drinking water sources, tanks/reservoirs, vents, should be covered/fenced and maintained to prevent access by animals and vermin.
- Drinking water supplies should not be located close to any discharge, soak-away or drain.
- Ensure that local pollution sources e.g. slurry and silage storage areas, waste water treatment systems, are being operated and maintained correctly.
- Check that local landowners/farmers are aware of your water supply and the need to avoid contaminating it by e.g. farming activities such as animals grazing, spreading of manure/slurry and use of fertilisers and pesticides, location/maintenance of waste water treatment systems, damage due to landfilling/excavation works.



For Supplies from streams, rivers, ponds and lakes

- The collection system should include a settlement pond or collection chamber to allow larger particles to settle out before water flows into your supply.
- The collection system should include sand or gravel filters to remove organic material such as leaves, small particles and small animals before water flows into your supply. These filters will not remove all small organisms or chemical contamination.

- Ensure that the water source is not contaminated by discharges further upstream from sewage works, septic tanks and other small on-site sewage treatment systems.

3. Consider getting your supply checked

Consider taking a minimum number of samples per year to check the quality of your supply. Samples should be tested by an accredited laboratory. But remember that a test can only tell you about the quality of your supply at the time of the test and the quality of water may change at different times.

If you are concerned about the quality of your supply or are concerned that your supply may be contaminated you should get it checked immediately. You should contact Longford County Council for advice in relation to your supply or the HSE for advice regarding protection of public health. Notify the Environment Section of Longford County Council regarding potential polluting activities in the catchment area of your water supply.

4. Consider treating your supply.

Best practice is to ensure that your supply complies with the quality requirements of the EC (Drinking Water)(No.2) Regulations, 2007. This may require the installation of a water treatment system. If you know or suspect that your supply is contaminated you should consider getting it treated to remove the contamination. If your supply serves other properties it is better and cheaper to install treatment for the whole supply, provided the other property owners agree, than to install treatment at each property. The choice of treatment must suit your supply and the contamination present.

5. Consider your water supply pipework.

It is important to note that treatment alone does not guarantee the safety of your drinking water supply. Regular scouring/flushing of your supply pipework is recommended. If your water supply passes through lead pipes, either inside or outside your property, it may contain high levels of lead. Lead can be particularly harmful to infants and your children. Replacement of lead pipework is recommended. If in doubt seek advice from the HSE or Longford County Council.

Key Points to Remember

- Carry out regular inspections/maintenance of your drinking water source, treatment system and pipework.
- Get your drinking water supply tested regularly.
- If in doubt about any supply, seek advice from Longford County Council or the HSE.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

What can I do if I no longer want to use an unregulated private supply?

If you no longer want to use your unregulated private supply because of the cost of treating or improving it, connections to a regulated public water supply may be an option. You should contact Longford County Council to enquire if this is possible and how much it would cost. However, this may not be possible or may be too expensive if the nearest regulated public supply is some distance away.

What if I supply water to other people or properties?

If you supply water as part of a commercial activity, e.g., bed and breakfast, or to other properties for a charge, or rent out holiday accommodation, your supply is regulated by the EC (Drinking Water) (No.2) Regulations, 2007. You are required to contact Longford County Council to register your supply.

If you supply water to other properties free of charge, you still have a duty of care to the users of water in those properties. If you think your water supply is unsafe because of contamination you should contact Longford County Council or your local Health Service Executive who will be able to advise you.

Are there grants available towards the installation of water treatment?

There are grants available for the necessary improvement of an individual water supply to a house provided that the area in which the house is located is not served by an existing or proposed public water supply or a group water scheme.

There are also grants available towards the upgrading of Group Water Schemes, i.e., where two or more households are being supplied with water from the same source.

You are advised to contact Longford County Council's Water Services Section to determine if you are eligible for grants prior to undertaking any upgrade works on the scheme. (Certain terms & conditions apply).

Further Information

**Water Services Department,
Longford County Council,
Great Water Street, Longford.
Tel 043 3343361/3346356. www.longfordcoco.ie**

Longford Local Authorities



KEEPING YOUR

PRIVATE

WATER SUPPLY SAFE



Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

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