

INVESTIGATION OF THREATS TO DRINKING WATER

The BC *Drinking Water Protection Act* makes water suppliers ultimately responsible for ensuring users are protected from drinking water health hazards. Water suppliers must take appropriate steps to ensure water is safe, including providing treatment that meets established drinking water objectives. For typical surface water sources this means providing filtration and disinfection. For more information on the drinking water protection and treatment, visit <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-safety.aspx>.

In British Columbia the shared use of watersheds is a common practice supported by government. Through the *Drinking Water Protection Act* a duty of care is imposed on people conducting activities within watersheds to ensure drinking water is not contaminated. A number of best management practices have been established for activities in watersheds; operations using best management practices are not likely to be seen as posing significant risk to drinking water safety.

Do you have a concern about the safety of your drinking water, including?

- activities occurring upstream in your watershed (e.g. logging, cattle grazing, and recreation)
- quality of water coming from your tap (e.g. colour, odour, taste)
- public notifications regarding potential health threats (e.g. algal blooms; turbidity events)

Do you have an enquiry or complaint?

An important function of Interior Health, Health Protection Services is to respond to enquiries and complaints about environmental health hazards, including threats to drinking water. All such requests are handled in a fair, evidence-based, and confidential manner that recognizes the individual's right to reconsideration and appeal. Where a drinking water health hazard exists or there is a significant risk of an imminent drinking water health hazard, Drinking Water Officers can order actions to ensure public health is protected. For more information on our complaint response services, visit <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-safety.aspx?id=538> or contact your local health protection office.

Beyond the complaint response service provided by Health Protection Services, Section 29 of the BC *Drinking Water Protection Act* provides for anyone to request an investigation into a threat to their drinking water supply. Upon receiving a request, under Section 29 Drinking Water Officers are required by law to consider whether an investigation is warranted and respond to the complainant. In consideration of whether a violation may have occurred, the Drinking Water Officer will consider a number of factors, including whether the matter is a health risk to the users of the water source. The *Act* provides Drinking Water Officers with powers to immediately address public health threats.

Requests for an investigation into a threat to your drinking water supply under Section 29 can be submitted to your local health protection office. Please refer to the Ministry of Health Living and Sport guidelines at www.hls.gov.bc.ca/protect/dwpublications.html for a list of the information that should be included in your request.