

(Jun 2020) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for SPSs regarding Water Quality tests:

Why are water quality tests required? Small Private Supplies, involved in the provision of water to the public, are legally obliged to have Water Quality tests undertaken, outlined in S.I. 122 – Drinking Water Regulations (2014) and (Drinking Water) (Amendment) Regulations 2017.

What types of tests are required?

Compliance monitoring:

Two different types of tests are required, measuring a range of parameters. These tests are titled ‘check’ (a ‘check’ comprises some ‘microbiological’, ‘indicator’ and ‘chemical’ parameters) and ‘audit’. (‘Audit’ comprises all parameters from the Microbiological, Chemical and Indicatory categories covered in the 2017 amendment Drinking Water Regulations). Frequency for both categories is based on volume used per day/consumers on the supply. Data from this category is returned to the EPA on an annual basis and forms part of the annual drinking water returns from Offaly County Council.

Operational Monitoring:

This category comprises E. coli, Coliform Bacteria and Colony Count @22°C and can change pending changes in water quality. Results are used to assess water treatment and will demonstrate if chlorine dosing is being managed effectively. Results from this category will not be returned to the EPA.

How many tests does my SPS have each year, and what is the water tested for?

The frequency of the tests, and the parameters, are advised in S.I. 122 – Drinking Water Regulations (2014). The frequency of tests depends on volume of water produced.

Who decides the test regime for each year? Under the Water Services Act (2007), the local authority (Offaly County Council) is the Water Services Authority, obliged to ensure SPSs have monitoring undertaken. Offaly County Council the supervisory authority and they consult with the HSE, as the public health authority, to draw up the required frequency of tests.

Who is taking the samples? A team of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from the HSE are involved in taking water quality test sampling programme.

Who is doing the tests? Laois County Council laboratory do the analysis of ‘check’ and ‘operational’ parameters. Where ‘audit’ tests are required, the analysis is subcontracted by Laois lab to a contract laboratory.

How much do tests cost? A ‘check’ sample currently costs €90. An operational test currently cost a standard €30 per test for microbiological parameters. Both Microbiological and chemical parameters are required for a full ‘check’. An ‘audit’ sample costs €390 minimum.

Why should I pay the costs of these tests?

Section 20 of the European Communities (Drinking Water) (No 2) Regulations 2014 advises:

Charges by supervisory authorities.

20. (1) A supervisory authority may charge for monitoring the quality of water supplies intended for human consumption.

(2) A charge made by a supervisory authority by virtue of paragraph (1) shall be of such amount as the authority considers appropriate, but shall not exceed the cost of such monitoring.

(3) A supervisory authority may recover the amount of any charge made by it under paragraph (1) as a simple contract debt in any court of competent jurisdiction.

Am I advised of the SPS test results? Where an exceedance on a test result occurs, the SPS is notified immediately, and a relevant restriction may be placed on the SPS regarding water provision. Tests in addition to the original sampling programme for that SPS may then be required. Where there is no exceedance on a test result, the Council will notify the SPS, when the results are made available from the HSE to OCC.

Can I get a copy of the Water Services Act and the current Drinking Water Regulations? Both of the above are available for download at http://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Water_Services/Publications/

Can I get a copy of what the EPA have advised on?

Yes, the Environmental Protection Agency have produced an advice note ‘Focus on Private Water Supplies 2018’ See Environmental Protection Agency - <http://www.epa.ie>