

**[DOH ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2014-0027,
September 04, 2014]**

**NATIONAL POLICY ON WATER SAFETY PLAN (WSP) FOR ALL
DRINKING-WATER SERVICE PROVIDERS**

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1. RATIONALE

Water is a core element of life. Every human being needs water in order to survive and remain healthy. Because of this need, it is proper to provide everyone with access to clean and safe water. In the Philippines, access to clean and safe water is around 82% as reported in the 2011 Field Health Service Information System (FHSIS) of the Department of Health (DOH). In the same annual FHSIS report, around 21% of the total households have access to improved safe water supply thru Level I water systems, while around 13% of the total households depend on Level II water systems, and almost half of the households (45%) are dependent of Level III water systems.

Despite this high coverage of water supply, a lot of Filipinos are still exposed to unsafe water. The current environmental changes and uncontrolled risks due to human activities and natural events are threats to the safe quality of water. Vulnerability to contamination of water supply systems becomes higher due to extreme weather events brought by global warming and climate change and the occurrence of emergencies and disasters. As a result, outbreaks of waterborne diseases in different parts of the country have occurred in the last ten (10) years as reported in the Field Epidemiology Training Programme Outbreak Investigation Reports of the National Epidemiology Center of the DOH. Prominent incidences were the suspect cholera cases outbreak in the whole province of Catanduanes (2012) with 2,321 cases, typhoid fever outbreak in Tuburan, Cebu (2012) with 480 cases, the diarrhea outbreak in Pangasinan Province (2006) that affected more than 12,000 people, the diarrhea outbreak in Virac, Catanduanes (2005) with nearly 700 cases and the cholera outbreak in Bataraza, Palawan (2005) which victimized more than 1,400 people. Similar outbreaks of water-borne diseases were reported in Maydolong, Eastern Samar (2011) and Sibulan, Negros Oriental (2005). Based on the investigation conducted by the Department of Health on such outbreaks, there were findings of the presence of contamination at different points of the water systems. With the impact of anthropogenic and environmental factors to water quality and waterborne diseases, the DOH, in accordance with its mandate of being primarily responsible for the formulation, planning, implementation and coordination of policies and programs in the field of health, strongly supports the application of a risk management approach, known as water safety plan (WSP), by all water service providers.

The WSP is a management tool that can be applied in all types of water systems to ensure the safe quality of supplied water. The WSP uses a comprehensive risk assessment and risk management approach encompassing all steps in water supply from water source (catchment) to consumer. The traditional approach of monitoring water quality at the tap is found to be ineffective because notification comes too late whenever there is contamination. Consumers have already ingested the water before an action could be made. WSP can address this gap by ensuring that notification will come on time while addressing the risks by appropriate control measures. WSPs objectives are to prevent or minimize contamination of water source, remove contamination thru treatment and prevent re-contamination during storage, distribution and handling of drinking-water.

WSPs are increasingly recognized as a cost-effective, management-oriented, preventive approach to drinking-water safety. Water safety planning has been a key recommendation in the World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality (3rd and 4th edition). There are quantifiable beneficial effects of WSP on water quality and public health as well as on operation of water utilities (Gunnarsdottir, 2012). Other Asian countries (e.g. Vietnam, Laos, China, Singapore, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal) have started adopting water safety plans. In the Philippines, the WSP approach was introduced by the WHO in 2006 and its scale up is currently supported by WHO and AusAID.

With the current issues on global warming, climate change, and natural disasters that impact on water quality and health of the Filipino people, an innovative strategy like water safety plan has to be supported by a policy in order that all drinking-water service providers will exert efforts in coming up with the most effective means of dealing with risks that threaten the safe quality of drinking-water and public health.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Health hereby declares the development and implementation of Water Safety Plan by all drinking-water service providers as a national policy for drinking-water quality management.

This policy supports the goals of the following international and local initiatives related to drinking-water supply:

1. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/2 of 2000 endorsed and affirmed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on safe water which states, *"to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water"*. To track the progress of this target, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation was established and has been recognized as the official United Nations mechanism for monitoring accomplishments towards the MDG for drinking-water and sanitation;
2. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/64/292 of 2010 recognized the right to safe and clean drinking-water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. It called upon Member States (including the Philippines) and international organizations to provide financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer, through international assistance and cooperation, in particular to developing countries, in order to scale up efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all;

3. The 64th World Health Assembly Resolution 64.24 of 2011 urged Member States (including the Philippines) of the World Health Organization to work to strengthen, as necessary, the establishment, implementation and quality control of water safety plans;
4. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/288 of 2012 affirmed the Rio +20 Summit declarations which recognized that water is at the core of sustainable development. It highlighted the commitment of Member States (including the Philippines) to the progressive realization of access to safe and affordable drinking-water and basic sanitation for all;
5. Drinking-water safety concerns are covered by Section 15 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which stipulates that, *"The state shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them"*;
6. The primary function of the Department of Health is the promotion, protection, preservation and restoration of the health of the people through the provision and delivery of health services and through the regulation and encouragement of providers of health goods and services. The Code on Sanitation of the Philippines of 1975 (P.D. 856) mandates the DOH to promulgate rules and regulations for the proper implementation and enforcement of the Code, including provisions on drinking-water supply, among others. Sections 3.a, 3.d and 9 contain provisions on drinking-water safety which states that: *"The Department of Health shall have the following powers and functions:*
 - a. Undertake the promotion and preservation of the health of the people and raise the health standards of individuals and communities throughout the Philippines;*
 - b. Upgrade the standards of medical practice, the quality of health services and programs to assure the people of better health services;*
 - c. Standards for drinking water and their bacteriological and chemical examinations, together with the evaluation of results shall conform to the criteria set by the National Drinking Water Standards. The treatment of water to render it safe for drinking and the disinfection of the contaminated water sources together with their distribution systems shall be in accordance with procedures set by the Department of Health."*
7. The Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (R.A. 9275, Sec. 22d) designates the DOH as the agency primarily responsible for the promulgation, revision and enforcement of drinking water quality standards;
8. Pursuant to the Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973 (PD 198, as amended) and Executive Order No. 124 (1987), the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) exercises regulatory powers over local water districts and Rural Waterworks and Sanitation Associations (RWSA), respectively. LWUA has the power and duty to establish standards for local water districts and RWSA, and adopt rules and regulations for its enforcement;
9. The 2007 Philippine National Standards for Drinking-Water (DOH AO No. 2007-0012) recognizes the importance of water safety plans and encourages all drinking-water service providers to prepare such plans; and
10. The Aquino Administration Health Agenda (2010-2016) contains the Universal Health Care (Kalusugang Pangkalahatan) strategy as embodied in Administrative Order No. 2010-0036. It aims to address the gaps and challenges on inequity in health. One of the goals of this strategy is to have better health outcomes through the attainment of health-related MDGs which include safe water and sanitation.

III. OBJECTIVES

This Order shall set a national policy to require all drinking-water service providers to develop and implement water safety plan.

Further, this Order shall aim to increase the awareness of stakeholders on WSP approach as a management tool; develop, adopt and implement systems and procedures for WSP; and eventually strengthen the capacity of drinkingwater service providers and partners in the development and implementation of WSP.

IV. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

This Administrative Order, hereafter referred to as 'this Order', shall apply to the development and implementation of WSP by all public and private drinkingwater service providers managing or operating the following water supply systems:

Water Supply System	Drinking Water Service Provider
	Water District (WD) Rural Waterworks and Sanitation Association (RWSA) Local Government Unit (LGU) Barangay Waterworks and Sanitation Association (BWSA) Special Economic Zone drinking-water service provider
Level 3	Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) or other concessionaires Water service cooperative Homeowners Association/Subdivision Developer Other recognized drinking-water service provider RWSA LGU
Level 2	BWSA Water service cooperative Other recognized drinking-water service provider BWSA
Level 1	Water service cooperative Other recognized drinking-water service provider
Retail Water System or Refilling Station	Retail drinking-water service provider
Bulk Water System	Bulk water service provider
Mobile Water System	Mobile drinking-water service provider

V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For purposes of this Order, the following terms are defined as follows:

A. Drinking-water service provider - any of the following company, agency or institution in-charge of operating a potable water supply system:

1. Water District (WD) - a local corporate entity that operates and maintains a water supply system in one or more provincial cities or municipalities. It is classified as a government-owned and controlled corporation, existing under the authority of The Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973 (P.D. 198, as amended);
2. Rural Waterworks and Sanitation Association (RWSA) - Cooperative, non-profit, non-stock association operating a rural water supply and sanitation system by virtue of E.O. 577 (1980), E.O. 869 (1983) and E.O. 124 (1987);
3. Barangay Waterworks and Sanitation Association (BWSA) - composed of member-consumers who administers, operates and maintains a barangay water supply system. The BWSA is registered with the municipal or city council and formed and organized by virtue of R.A. 6716 (1989);
4. Concessionaire - a private company with concession or franchise agreement to manage and operate water supply facilities owned by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) under R.A. 8041 (1995) and E.O. 311 (1996), or any similar water supply operator; or
5. Water service cooperative - a cooperative duly registered with the Cooperative Development Authority under R.A. 9520 (2008) whose main purpose or one of its purposes is to own, operate, and manage water supply systems for the provision and distribution of potable water to its members and other customers;

B. Local Drinking Water Quality Monitoring Committee (LDWQMC) - an entity formed at the city or municipal level whose mandate is to monitor the safe quality of drinking-water per Code on Sanitation of the Philippines (P.D. 856);

C. Resource center - any accredited institution which can be a repository of WSP materials and can conduct trainings on water safety plan;

D. Special Economic Zone (ECOZONE) - a selected area with highly developed or which have the potential to be developed into agro-industrial, industrial, tourist/recreational, commercial, banking, investment and financial center. An ECOZONE may contain any or all of the following enterprises: Industrial Estates, Export Processing Zones, Free Trade Zones and Tourist/ Recreational Centers. Enterprises in an ECOZONE established by virtue of R.A. 7916 (1995) as amended by R.A. 8748 (1999) are registered and regulated by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA). ECOZONE enterprises formed under the authority of R.A. 7227 (1992) are registered and regulated by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA);

E. Stakeholders - institutions, agencies, or group of people that are influenced by, or may have influence to, the quality of water source and product water;

F. Water safety plan (WSP) - the use of a comprehensive risk assessment and risk management approach that encompasses all steps in water supply from catchment to consumer to consistently ensure the safety of drinking water. The following are WSP associated terms:

1. WSP elements - the major contents of a WSP document include (a) preparation of the WSP Team (b) water supply system assessment (c) operational monitoring (d) management and communication (e) feedback and