

# Water Safety Plans

## *Managing drinking-water quality from catchment to consumer*

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# Contents

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	iv
FOREWORD.....	v
1.INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 World Health Organization Guidelines .....	2
1.2 Current management approaches .....	5
1.3 The basis for water safety .....	6
1.4 Framework for Safe Drinking-water and Water Safety Plans .....	6
2.ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND LEGAL ASPECTS .....	13
2.1 Roles and responsibilities in the provision of safe drinking-water .....	13
2.2 Structure of the book.....	17
3.ORGANISING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATER SAFETY PLANS .....	18
3.1 Commitment to the water safety plan approach .....	18
3.2 Development of a water safety plan .....	19
3.3 Assemble the water safety plan team.....	20
3.4 Intended water use.....	22
3.5 Case studies .....	24
4.WATER SUPPLY DESCRIPTION .....	29
4.1 Describe the water supply .....	29
4.2 Construct flow diagram.....	32
4.3 Confirmation of flow diagram .....	34
4.4 Melbourne Water case study – abbreviated supply description.....	35
4.5 Kampala case study – abbreviated supply description.....	37
5.UNDERSTANDING THE HAZARDS AND THREATS .....	38
5.1 Hazard identification.....	38
5.2 Hazardous events.....	40
5.3 Prioritising hazards.....	41
5.4 Melbourne Water case study – hazard analysis.....	43
5.5 Kampala case study – hazard analysis.....	45
6.CONTROL MEASURES AND PRIORITIES.....	49
6.1 Determine control measures .....	49
6.2 Melbourne Water case study – control measures.....	54
6.3 Kampala Water case study – control measures .....	56

7.LIMITS AND MONITORING.....	58
7.1 Monitoring parameters.....	59
7.2 Operational limits.....	60
7.3 Monitoring.....	61
7.4 Melbourne Water case study – critical limits and monitoring.....	62
7.5 Kampala case study – critical limits and monitoring.....	63
8.MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES.....	66
8.1 Corrective actions and incident response .....	66
8.2 Melbourne Water case study – corrective actions and contingency measures .....	67
8.2 Kampala case study – corrective actions and contingency measures ...	68
8.3 Emergency management procedures .....	70
9.SUPPORTING PROGRAMMES.....	76
9.1 Melbourne Water Case Study-Supporting Programmes .....	76
9.2 Kampala case study – supporting programmes .....	76
10.DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING .....	78
10.1 Documenting the water safety plan .....	78
10.2 Record keeping and documentation.....	79
10.3 Melbourne Water case study - documentation .....	80
10.4 Kampala case study - documentation .....	81
11.VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION.....	82
11.1 Validation .....	82
11.2 Verification.....	84
11.3 Melbourne Water case study - validation.....	86
11.4 Kampala case study – validation and verification.....	87
12.SYSTEM ASSESSMENT, UPGRADING SYSTEMS AND NEW SUPPLIES .....	89
12.1 Assessing an existing system against health-based targets .....	89
12.2 Using the risk assessment data for investment .....	92
12.3 Preparing a water safety plan for new supplies .....	92
13.WATER SAFETY PLANS FOR SMALL SYSTEMS.....	95
13.1 Prioritising hazards.....	95
13.2 Small system approaches .....	96
13.3 Developing generic technology water safety plans.....	97
13.4 Guides to aid local development of water safety plans .....	110
14.WATER SAFETY PLAN REVIEW, APPROVAL AND AUDIT .....	116
14.1 Introduction .....	116
14.2 Implementation, human resources and documentation.....	117
14.3 Evaluating the system assessment .....	118
14.4 Hazardous events.....	120

14.5 Evaluating control measures .....	121
14.6 Monitoring and established limits.....	122
14.7 Corrective actions.....	123
14.8 Documentation and reporting .....	123
14.9 Validation and research.....	124
14.10 Verification plan.....	124
14.11 Audit.....	124
 15.TIMESCALE AND COST IMPLICATIONS.....	 126
15.1 Timescale.....	126
15.2 Cost implications.....	129
 REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	 133
 APPENDIX A: EXTRACTS FROM THE GOLD COAST WATER .(GCW) WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM .....	  137
 APPENDIX B: MODEL WATER SAFETY PLANS .....	 184
 APPENDIX C: SANITARY INSPECTION FORMS .....	 225

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## List of abbreviations

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ADWG	Australian Drinking Water Guidelines
BWSA	Bulk water supply agreement
CT	Concentration x time (disinfection)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
GCW	Gold Coast Water (Australia)
GDWQ	Guidelines for Drinking-water quality
GL	Giga litres
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
HPC	Heterotrophic Plate Count
HU	Hazen Unit
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MAK	Makerere University (Uganda)
MW	Melbourne Water (Australia)
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council (Australia)
NTU	Nephelometric turbidity unit
NWSC	National Water and Sewerage Corporation (Uganda)
O&M	Operation and maintenance
OSUL	Onde Services Uganda Limited (Uganda)
PHAST	Participatory health and sanitation transformation
SCADA	Supervisory control and data acquisition
SOP	Standard operating procedure
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
WEDC	Water, Engineering and Development Centre (UK)
WHO	World Health Organization
WQCD	Water Quality Control Department (Uganda)
WSP	Water safety plan

# Foreword

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The first World Health Organization (WHO) publication dealing specifically with drinking-water quality was published in 1958 as *International Standards for Drinking-water*. It was subsequently revised in 1963 and in 1971 under the same title. In 1984-85, the first edition of the WHO *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality* (GDWQ) was published in three volumes:

- Volume 1 – Recommendations;
- Volume 2 – Health Criteria and other Supporting Information; and
- Volume 3 – Surveillance and Control of Community Supplies.

The second editions of the three volumes of the *Guidelines* were published in 1993, 1996 and 1997, respectively. Addenda to the first and second volumes were published in 1998, addressing selected chemicals only. An addendum on microbial aspects reviewing selected microorganisms was published in 2002.

The primary aim of the GDWQ is the protection of public health. The GDWQ provide an assessment of the health risk presented by microorganisms, chemicals and radionuclides present in drinking-water. The guideline values recommended for individual constituents of water are not mandatory limits – they are intended to be used in the development of risk management strategies, including national or regional standards developed in the context of local or national environmental, social, economic and cultural conditions. Such strategies, if properly implemented, will ensure the safety of drinking-water supplies through the elimination, or reduction to an acceptable concentration, of constituents of water that are known to be hazardous to health.

It was recommended in 1995 that the GDWQ undergo a rolling revision process. Through this process, microbes and chemicals are subject to periodic review, and documentation related to aspects of protection and control of drinking-water quality is prepared progressively. This process was initiated at a meeting of the Coordinating Committee for the Rolling Revision of the GDWQ, at which three working groups (namely the Microbial Aspects working group, the Chemical Aspects working group and the Aspects of Protection and Control of drinking-water quality working group) were established.

The Coordinating Committee adopted the following:

- a plan of work for the development of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the GDWQ and their subsequent rolling revision;
- a plan of work for the development of supportive materials for implementation of the GDWQ; and
- a Procedures Manual for the conduct of the preparation of the third edition of the GDWQ and their subsequent rolling revision.

The programme of work of the Microbial Aspects working group was adopted directly by the 1995 Coordinating Committee meeting. In its first phase of work, review documents on a number of specific microbes were prepared. A future strategy for major revision of the microbial aspects of the WHO water-related guidelines, including the GDWQ, was also developed.

The Chemical Aspects working group considered a wide range of different potential chemical contaminants classified broadly in relation to the source of contamination and the route to drinking-water, in order to aid consideration of risk assessment and management options, as follows:

- naturally occurring chemicals (which include the majority of the most important chemical contaminants with regard to public health);
- chemicals from industrial sources and human dwellings;
- chemicals from agriculture; and
- chemicals used in water treatment or materials in contact with drinking-water.

The working group on Aspects of Protection and Control met in 1996 (Bad Elster, Germany) and in 1998 (Medmenham, UK). The terms of reference of the working group have been established, and five institutions assist in the coordination of the principal thematic areas of work as follows:

- resource and source protection (Federal Environmental Agency, Berlin);
- materials and chemicals used in the production and distribution of drinking-water (NSF-International);
- water treatment (WRc, UK); and
- monitoring and assessment (Robens Centre, UK; VKI, Denmark).

All of these institutions are WHO Collaborating Centres concerned with water. A plan of work has been pursued, based initially upon the recommendations of the Coordinating Committee. This has included the development of a series of documents (principally relating to good practice in achieving the safe conditions described in the GDWQ) and organization of meetings.

During the revision of the WHO *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality* leading to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, the value of the Water Safety Plan (WSP) approach has repeatedly been highlighted. The potential for water safety plan application has been evaluated in a series of expert review meetings in Berlin (2000), Adelaide (2001) and Loughborough (2001). This document describes the water safety plan approach and further substantiation is provided in a set of companion volumes addressing source protection, treatment processes (at supply and household level), distribution of drinking-water and selection of parameters and analytical methods. Key supporting texts include:

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