

# Proposed Group B Rule revisions

# What About Existing Group B Systems?

## Discussion Paper #3

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August 2010

### Background

In 2009, the Governor and the Legislature set a new direction for regulating Group B public water systems by eliminating all state funding for this program and providing regulatory flexibility. They did this because Group B systems serve a small population, and the cost to provide regulatory oversight is relatively high. The [law](#) authorizes the State Board of Health (Board) to:

- Establish requirements for the initial design and construction of a Group B water system. This change allows the Board to eliminate ongoing requirements after initial approval of the system.
- Allow local health jurisdictions (health department or health district) to establish Group B requirements that are more stringent than state requirements.

The law also authorizes the Board to eliminate some, or all, regulatory requirements for Group B systems serving four or fewer connections. The current draft only eliminates requirements for some one- and two-connection Group B systems.

### The Challenge

The draft Group B rule proposes eliminating ongoing monitoring requirements for Group B public water systems. The draft rule also includes more rigorous initial design standards, which will help protect public health without ongoing monitoring.

The strengthened initial design and construction standards will not affect the roughly 13,000 existing Group B systems. Those systems were approved under the design standards in the existing rule or earlier standards. Our challenge is to protect public health for existing Group B consumers without ongoing monitoring.

### Education is Key

We are hopeful that once Group B owners, operators, and consumers understand that the state no longer has standards or enforcement authority for ongoing monitoring, system consumers will take a more active role to protect the safety of their water supply.

Sampling water quality is just one activity—combined with other important tasks—that is necessary to assure a safe and reliable drinking water supply. Consumers, water system owners, and operators need to know how to do all of the following:

- Keep the system's source protected.
- Follow industry standards for repairs and disinfection.
- Have a regular maintenance and replacement schedule to avoid problems.

We will develop guidance for Group B water systems that describes what to test for and when. This information will be available on our Group B website when the rule is final. We also have an e-mail list you can subscribe to at [http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/default.htm#Join\\_](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/default.htm#Join_)

## **Other public health protection efforts for existing Group B systems**

### **We will still respond to public health emergencies.**

When a Group B water system runs into trouble, they can still call us for assistance. We will continue to provide advice and technical assistance to help resolve water outages, contamination, or other serious problems.

### **We will be clear about our oversight role.**

The draft Group B rule proposes a framework that is clear to both consumers and Group B water system owners about what we will regulate and what we will not.

### **Existing approvals will be honored.**

Group B systems approved under previous requirements will be able to operate under the scope of their approval.

### **We will retain oversight over several key requirements.**

There are a few situations in the proposed Group B rule that will require Group B water systems to obtain our approval. These include:

- Expanding an existing water system.
- Adding, replacing, or making changes to the drinking water source, such as drilling a new well.

### **Enhanced public notification requirements.**

The proposed rule expands notification requirements. If a Group B system obtains a sample with *E. coli*, if the nitrate concentration exceeds 10 parts per million, or if there is a problem such as flooding of the well, the system will be required to notify customers within 24 hours.

### **For more information:**

Additional information is available in discussion papers #1 and #2:

*[Eliminating Ongoing Monitoring Requirements](#)*

*[Initial Design Standards](#)*

Please visit the Group B webpage at [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/groupb.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/groupb.htm) You can also contact David Christensen, Policy Unit Supervisor and Rule Lead, at [david.christensen@doh.wa.gov](mailto:david.christensen@doh.wa.gov) or (360) 236-3153.

