



## RECYCLED WATER | INFORMATION SHEET10

# Recycled Water – Public Health Incident Notification and Response

May 2015

### Background

The Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling (AGWR) (2006) identifies the development and implementation of incident notification and response protocols as a priority. Recycled water incident notification and response protocols are key to ensuring the continued protection of public and environmental health if preventative measures fail.

### What is a recycled water public health incident?

Recycled water quality is to be fit for purpose. A recycled water incident occurs when person/s may be exposed to inadequately treated recycled water, or recycled water is not used as intended.

Recycled water incidents may include:

Recycled Water delivered to customers below the specified quality (Critical Control Point breaches)
Non-compliance with health related water quality objectives (microbiological monitoring results)
Suspected or identified cross connections with drinking water systems
Customer or community health complaint concerning recycled water quality
Post treatment contamination of recycled water
Use of water for a purpose not authorised or intended

### Developing a recycled water incident notification and response protocol

An incident notification and response protocol should be developed in consultation with the local NSW Health Public Health Unit and the NSW Office of Water.

The protocol should define potential incidents that are specific to the recycled water system and include sufficient detail to determine an incident. This may include treatment information such as the

critical control point critical limits, health related water quality objectives such as microbiological criteria and end use information.

The roles, responsibilities and contact details of all involved parties need to be clearly defined and kept up to date. Incident notification to the local NSW Health Public Health Unit should occur immediately and be followed up in writing within 24 hours to both NSW Health Public Health Unit and NSW Office of Water.

The protocol should refer to the NSW Health Recycled Water Response Protocol (in development) and consider response actions such as conducting an investigation, recycled water supply shutdown, switch to potable water (if available), and community notification.

Align the protocol with other notification and incident response protocols such as those required by other government agencies (i.e. EPA) and drinking water incident protocols in the drinking water management system if relevant.

A debrief process should be included in the protocol.

### Training and Review

All relevant employees should be trained to use the incident notification and response protocol. This may include conducting regular exercises to test the protocol.

The protocol may require more frequent updating than the whole recycled water management system. The protocol should be reviewed regularly – at least annually or updated when there are any relevant staff or system changes.

## More information

The Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling  
(2006)

For more information visit [www.water.nsw.gov.au](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au) or  
contact: [rwapprovals@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rwapprovals@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

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## Acknowledgments

NSW Health

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