



THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION



FROM SOURCE TO TAP: The Journey of Your Drinking Water

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Life as we know it depends on water. It is the most essential element for the survival of every living organism on Earth, yet it is something we often take for granted. How often do we stop to think about where our drinking water comes from or how it becomes so conveniently available to us? Today, it is commonplace to turn on a faucet and have an endless supply of clean, safe drinking water at our fingertips. But with this convenience, we may forget just how hard it was to secure fresh, clean drinking water throughout history. In the early days of our nation, pioneers often struggled to find reliable water sources. Through exploration, innovation and technological advancements, we have developed systems that can now provide clean drinking water to vast populations.

So, have you ever wondered, “Where does my water come from?” Understanding the source of our water is essential, not just for our awareness but for making informed decisions about how we use and conserve this vital resource. By learning more about where our water originates – whether from underground aquifers or surface bodies like lakes and rivers – we can gain a greater appreciation for the systems that bring this life-sustaining resource into our homes.

If you get your water from a municipal system, you can find detailed information about its quality and safety in the system’s Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), also known as the “water quality report” or “annual drinking water report.” These reports are mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Safe Drinking Water Act and are designed to help consumers understand where their drinking water comes from, how it is treated, and its overall quality.

Your local CCR will typically include the following key information:

WATER SOURCE INFORMATION: This section explains where your water originates, whether from a river, lake, reservoir, or underground aquifer. It may also describe efforts made by the utility to protect the water source from pollution and contamination.

WATER QUALITY DATA: This includes details on the contaminants tested for during the year, such as biological, chemical and physical pollutants. The report provides the levels of each contaminant detected, comparing these levels to the EPA's maximum allowable limits for safe drinking water. If any contaminants exceed these limits, the report will highlight the issue and may include recommendations or actions the utility is taking to address it.

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS: This section clarifies key terms, such as health effects, units of measurement, maximum contaminant levels (MCLs), and maximum contaminant level goals (MCLGs), helping you better understand the technical details of the report.

WATER TREATMENT AND MEASURES: If any water quality issues are identified, this section outlines the treatment methods used, such as filtration or chlorination, and any ongoing improvements being made to ensure the water remains safe.

LEAD AND COPPER TESTING: Many reports include information about lead and copper levels in the water. This is especially important for homes with older plumbing systems, where these metals can sometimes leach into drinking water.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Some reports provide advice for specific groups, such as pregnant women or individuals with weakened immune systems, if certain contaminants are present. It may also include plans the utility has for future improvements to water quality or infrastructure.

CONTACT INFORMATION: The report will include contact details for the water utility, giving you a direct line to ask questions or raise concerns.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORT:

COMPLIANCE: Does the utility meet EPA standards, or are there any violations?

CONTAMINANTS: What contaminants were detected, and at what levels? Are any of these levels above the EPA's maximum allowable limits?

HEALTH RISKS: Does the report highlight any risks for specific populations, such as children, pregnant women, or individuals with compromised immune systems?

TRANSPARENCY: Does the report clearly explain where the water comes from, how it is treated, and what actions the utility is taking to improve water quality?

The Consumer Confidence Report is an invaluable resource for understanding your drinking water's safety and quality. If you find any contaminants listed, you can reach out to your water utility for further information or take necessary precautions based on the guidance provided in the report.