

What is a Consumer Confidence Report? The 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments require that, beginning in October 1999, all community water systems provide customers with an annual report on the quality of their drinking water. The law calls this report a Consumer Confidence Report.

What are the major elements of a CCR? CCRs must contain -- at a minimum -- the following elements:

- Information on the type and source of the water (i.e., ground water, surface water, a combination of the two, or water obtained from another system) and the commonly used name(s) and location of the body or bodies of water
- Specific definitions of the following terms: Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG), Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), variances, exemptions, and, if applicable, treatment technique and action level
- If any regulated substance subject to an MCL (except turbidity and total coliforms) is detected in the water: a statement setting forth the MCLG, the MCL, the highest level used to determine compliance, and the range of detected levels. If there has been a violation of the MCL: a brief statement regarding the health concerns of that substance. If there is no MCL for a detected substance: information about treatment techniques or the action level
- If a source water assessment (SWA) has been completed, information on the availability of the SWA and how to obtain a copy. If a system has received an SWA from its primacy agency, the CCR must also include a brief summary of the system's susceptibility to potential sources of contamination
- Health effects language if a violation has occurred and a system's actions to restore safe water
- Information on compliance with national primary drinking water standards
- A notice if the system is operating under a variance or exemption and the basis on which the variance or exemption was granted
- Information on levels of unregulated substances for which monitoring is required, including levels of radon and *Cryptosporidium*, where states determine they may be found
- Educational information regarding the risk posed by nitrates, arsenic and lead when detection of these substances exceeds half of their respective MCL or action level
- A specific statement regarding the vulnerability of certain subpopulations to drinking water substances and where these people can obtain additional information
- Additional information as required by the EPA Administrator, such as reporting on the health effects of total trihalomethanes if a system exceeds the tougher 80 micrograms/L standard. EPA can also require such information for two other new or revised regulations in the future
- Notice for non-English-speaking residents in their native language on the importance of the information and the need to get it translated
- A brief and plainly worded explanation regarding substances that may reasonably be expected to be present in drinking water, including bottled water
- A specific statement that the presence of substances in drinking water does not necessarily indicate that the drinking water poses a health risk
- Notice of opportunities for the public to participate, such as water board meeting times or public forums to discuss water issues
- Any additional information required by state primacy agencies

The EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: (800) 426-4791

What are the key dates concerning CCRs?

The final CCR Rule was effective September 18, 1998.

The first CCR, containing 1998 calendar year data, must be produced by October 19, 1999.

Wholesale water distributors must provide information about their water to their wholesale customers by April 19, 1999.

The second report is due by July 1, 2000, and subsequent reports will be due by July 1 of each year thereafter.

Certification of the first CCRs to state primacy agencies must be completed by January 19, 2000, and certification of each subsequent CCR must occur within three months of distribution each year thereafter.

Each state primacy agency must adopt its own CCR Rule by August 21, 2000.

How does the CCR get distributed? One copy of the report must be mailed to each customer, unless the governor of a state has waived the mailing requirement for community water systems serving fewer than 10,000 persons.

- Systems for which the mailing requirement has been waived must:
- Inform their customers that the report will not be mailed;
- Publish the report in one or more local newspapers serving the area in which the system is located; and
- Make the reports available to the public upon request.

A further exception may apply to systems serving 500 or fewer persons, which may forego publication of the report in a local newspaper if they provide notice by mail, door-to-door delivery, or posting in an appropriate location that the report is available.

Who will make sure that utilities comply? State primacy agencies will be responsible for enforcing the CCR Rule. After utilities complete their CCR, they must send a copy to the state at the same time the CCRs are distributed to customers, and within three months follow the CCR with a certification to the state that they have met the requirements of the rule. States must keep the certification letter for five years, and a copy of the CCR for one year. The state must also provide copies of the CCRs to the public upon request.

If there is a question about a utility's compliance, any customer or public health interest group may file a complaint or make a request for a copy of the report from either EPA or the State Drinking Water Administrator.

Who produces CCRs? The CCR regulation applies to new and existing community water systems that have 15 or more service connections, or supply at least 25 of the same people year-round. Water wholesalers are included under the regulation, but their responsibility may be only to supply data and information to retailers if they have no end-use customers of their own.

What's the cost of creating a CCR? The cost of producing a CCR will have to be decided by each utility and will depend on a number of factors, such as the number of customers to whom it will be mailed, how long the report is, whether it will be produced in black and white or color, whether it contains graphics, photos, or other artwork, and whether it is done in-house or by a consultant. Some larger utilities may even spend thousands of dollars for editorial and graphic design assistance.

Who gets copies of CCRs? All water systems that serve more than 10,000 persons must deliver one copy of the CCR to each of their customers. Customers are defined as the listed accounts that are billed for water service. Systems serving fewer than 10,000 customers, but more than 500 customers, may receive waivers allowing them to publish the report in at least one local newspaper (instead of mailing to each customer). In this case they will have to notify all customers of the availability of the report (in their bill, newspaper ads, etc.). Systems serving 500 or fewer people may receive waivers allowing them to use alternate means of notifying customers about the availability of a CCR. They must do so at least once a year. In all cases, systems must supply copies of their report on request.

Must a system give out its CCR on request? Yes. Contact your water utility for information.

How will utilities accommodate people living in apartments and condominiums who don't get individual water bills? Water systems are asked to make a "good faith effort" to reach consumers who do not receive water bills. This group of consumers might be notified by:

- Posting the CCR on the Internet through Waterdata.com or a different site

- Press releases that the CCR is available
- Radio or TV public service announcements
- Paid advertising or legal notices of CCR availability
- Publication of the CCR, or parts of it, in general circulation newspapers
- Posting of the CCR in prominent locations
- Circulation of the CCR to libraries and community centers, or Postal patron mailings
- Sending extra reports to multi-family building managers for posting

What about new systems? New community water systems must deliver their first report by July 1 following their first full calendar year in operation.

How will compliance be certified? In states with primary enforcement authority, utilities must mail a copy of the completed CCR to the state along with certification of its accuracy, distribution, and compliance.

States must keep the certification letter for five years, and a copy of the CCR for one year. States may set up clearinghouses for the reports, either as a state function or through a designated third party. Interested persons can obtain copies of reports from these clearinghouses directly.

What if my utility doesn't produce a CCR or distributes one that doesn't meet the regulatory requirements? Water systems that do not implement a CCR program that meets the new EPA regulation will be in violation. The state primacy agency will then be expected to take enforcement action against these systems to require compliance.

If there is a question about a utility's compliance, any customer or public health interest group can file a complaint with either EPA or the State Drinking Water Administrator.