

DIVISION OF DRINKING WATER Policy/Procedure

Title:	Consumer Complaints	Number: A.14
References:	RCW 43.20.240	
Contact:	Al Rowe	
Effective Date:	October 25, 1996	
Supersedes:	N/A	
Approved:	(signed copy)	<i>Director, Division of Drinking Water</i>

POLICY:

The Department of Health (DOH), Division of Drinking Water, shall address every complaint about drinking water provided by a public water system, and follow-up with the owner of the system on every complaint involving issues of public health significance.

PURPOSE STATEMENT/BACKGROUND:

The Division of Drinking Water has developed a variety of methods of responding to consumer complaints. To achieve a consistent process for receiving, responding to and recording complaints, staff will implement a consumer complaint program that: 1) is simple for water system consumers to register a complaint, 2) assures each complaint will be processed by regional office staff, and 3) has staff record all consumer complaints in a filing system/database.

GENERAL PROCEDURE:

Operation staff will design, create and implement a complaint filing system/database that will enable staff to record information about an individual complaint (e.g., date, complainant's name, type of complaint, status of complaint (i.e., resolved or outstanding), review complaint correspondence, etc.) and make summary reports about all complaints. The database will track complaints received directly by the regional office and also complaints forwarded from outside parties (Headquarters, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) staff, Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJ), etc.)

Each regional office shall assign a "lead complaint staff person" responsible for carrying out the following procedure for all complaints received. Assigned lead complaint staff person may forward complaints to appropriate regional office staff for processing (e.g.,

Regional Engineer for immediate action if health threat). The lead complaint staff person shall be responsible to assure that each complaint is processed.

Processing Guidance

- A standard Drinking Water Consumer Complaint Form (complaint form) shall be completed for each complaint received.
- Staff shall take appropriate action to address and resolve each complaint (e.g., call owner, write letter, visit site, or use an enforcement tool, etc.).
- Upon referral, the lead complaint staff person shall determine whether to respond to the complaint directly or forward to appropriate Regional Office (RO) staff. Staff responding to complaint may contact complainant for further relevant information.
- After first contact with DOH staff, if a complainant does not wish to enter an “official complaint”, a complaint form does not have to be completed and processed.
- Complainant’s request for confidentiality is to be taken into account when developing the database and in the processing of complaints.
- If staff knows the complainant is served by a UTC-regulated system and the complaint concerns rates or service, they shall provide complainant with UTC’s 800 number.
- If, in response to a complaint, staff sends correspondence to the system owner, the complainant shall be sent a copy of the correspondence.
- If a system owner does not respond to a request to resolve a problem, staff has the discretion to take whatever action they deem appropriate, depending on the severity of the health threat involved (e.g., follow-up letter, enforcement tool, make a note of non-responsiveness in the system file).