



## **Frequently Asked Questions: Drinking Water Tank Inspection Reporting**

Updated August 2021

### **General**

#### **What is a drinking water tank?**

Drinking water tanks help deliver pressurized water to some buildings with more than six floors. As needed, pumps push water to rooftop tanks where the water is stored until used. When a faucet is turned on within the building, water exits the tank and gravity carries the water to the floors below to be used.

#### **Which types of water tanks are covered by the New York City (NYC) Health and Mental Hygiene's (Health Department) inspection and reporting requirement?**

The requirement applies to any tank used to store a building's drinking water. If the building has a dual-purpose water storage tank that includes a fire suppression system and a drinking water supply system, the tank must be inspected because some of the water is used as drinking water.

#### **Which types of water tanks are not covered by the Health Department's inspection and reporting requirement?**

Water storage tanks that are separate from the drinking water supply system, such as a stand-alone fire suppression tank, are not subject to this requirement. Domestic hot water heating tanks are also not subject to this requirement.

#### **Why does the Health Department require buildings to test drinking water tanks and report the results?**

Many NYC buildings store drinking water in tanks. The Health Department wants to make sure that drinking water tanks are free of harmful bacteria that could make New Yorkers sick.

#### **When and how often do drinking water tanks need to be inspected?**

The drinking water tank must be inspected at least once each calendar year (January 1 to December 31). The inspection can be done at any time within the calendar year. Regardless of when the inspection is done, the property owner must make sure that the water tank inspector submits the report electronically by the close of business on January 15 of the following year. For example, regardless of whether an inspection happens on January 1, 2021, December 31, 2021, or any date in between, the report must be submitted by January 15, 2022.

**My building does not have a drinking water tank but received a reminder from the Health Department about performing an annual inspection. What should I do?**

If your building does not have a tank used to hold drinking water but received a reminder from the Health Department, the property owner or a representative should notify the Health Department. To do so, access the online [Water Tank Inspection Reporting application](#) to report “zero drinking water tanks” at the building address. The Health Department may follow up to confirm the status. Make sure to include the Building Identification Number (BIN) and contact information for the property owner (including address, email and phone number).

**What are the City regulations that govern drinking water tanks?**

The relevant City regulations for drinking water storage tank inspections are [Section \(§\) 141.07](#) of Article 141 of the NYC Health Code, [Chapter 31](#) of Title 24 of the Rules of the City of New York (Commissioner’s Regulations) and [§17-194](#) of the Administrative Code of the City of New York.

The regulations that govern the design, cleaning and disinfection of water storage tanks are the NYC Health Code Article 141, [§141.09](#) and the NYC Construction Code, [Plumbing Code, Chapter 6 Section 606.5](#).

Parts (d) through (f) of [§141.07](#) of the NYC Health Code describe the requirements for public notice of inspection results, corrective action upon identification of unsanitary conditions and enforcement policies regarding failure to submit inspection reports.

**Who can perform a drinking water tank inspection?**

A qualified water tank inspector must conduct the inspection. To be qualified, an inspector must either be a licensed master plumber according to [Article 408 of Chapter 4 of Title 28 of the NYC Administrative Code](#), work under the direct and continuing supervision of such a licensed master plumber or be a licensed professional engineer or architect design professional as defined in [§28-101.5 of the NYC Administrative Code](#).

**What must the drinking water tank inspection include?**

The inspection must include all activities on the Health Department’s inspection reporting form. A printable version of the inspection report can be found online [here](#).

Part (b) of [§141.07](#) of the NYC Health Code provides a description of the required inspection activities. These include general inspection requirements (assessing the condition of the internal and external tank structures, pipes, access ladders, roof, access hatches and screens), sanitary inspection requirements (assessing the presence of sediment, biological growth, floatable debris or insects, and rodent or bird activity in or around the tank) as well as “bacteriological” sampling (collecting a sample and analyzing for the presence of harmful bacteria). The inspection report must also include a description of all unsanitary conditions and corrective actions.

If a drinking water tank or its supporting structure is structurally unsafe or dangerous, the water tank inspector or property owner shall take actions as required by [§28-301.1](#) of the NYC Administrative Code and report such condition to the Department of Buildings in writing.

[§17-194](#) of the NYC Administrative Code also states that the Health Department may require additional documentation including photographs or videos that show the interior and exterior of the water tank or receipts of work orders.

### **What does “bacteriological” mean?**

Bacteriological means relating to bacteria. The Health Department is concerned about “coliform” bacteria. If coliform bacteria are found in a building’s drinking water, the storage tank from which the sample was collected may be contaminated and require cleaning and disinfection.

### **What are the requirements for bacteriological sampling?**

Bacteriological water quality samples must be conducted in accordance with the [Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater](#) and must be analyzed and reported by a laboratory that is certified by the State of New York through the Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) to perform potable (drinking) water analyses. To find a currently certified ELAP laboratory online, visit [here](#).

Any sample which indicates the presence of coliform bacteria, such as E. coli, must be reported to the Health Department within 24 hours. Necessary corrective actions, such as cleaning and disinfection, must be taken immediately. The Health Department may be contacted by email at [watertanks@health.nyc.gov](mailto:watertanks@health.nyc.gov).

## **Reporting Drinking Water Tank Inspections**

### **Who reports drinking water tank inspection results to the Health Department?**

The water tank inspector must submit the drinking water tank inspection report to the Health Department. It is the property owner’s responsibility to make sure that the required yearly inspection is conducted and that the inspector submits the report to the Health Department on time.

### **How is the report submitted to the Health Department?**

The water tank inspector must submit the report on the Health Department’s online [Drinking Water Tank Inspection Reporting system](#). To complete the form, the water tank inspector will need to register with a valid email address. After registration, partially completed reports can be saved and finished later. Multiple tanks at a single building must be included in the same inspection report submission.

### **If a person owns more than one building, how are the inspection results reported?**

Property owners must ensure that a separate reporting form is submitted by the water tank inspector for each building with a unique Department of Buildings-issued BIN that uses a tank

to store drinking water. For example, if a property owner owns three separate buildings, each with a unique BIN and each with a drinking water tank, the water tank inspector would need to file three separate reports.

**Who is required to keep a copy of the inspection report and documentation?**

Both the water tank inspector and the property owner must keep a copy of the results and water quality test reports for at least five years from the date of inspection. A copy of the completed report can be publicly viewed from the Health Department web page [Drinking Water Tank Inspection Results](#). If the Health Department or a building resident asks for the results of an inspection report, the water tank inspector or property owner must provide them within five business days.

**Water Tank Cleaning**

**Who is qualified to perform water tank cleaning, painting or coating?**

The following professionals are qualified to perform water tank cleaning, painting or coating:

- A licensed master plumber or an individual working under the direct supervision of a licensed master plumber
- A registered engineer or architect
- A person who holds a commercial pesticide applicator certification in [Category 7G](#) issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation or an individual who works under the direct supervision of a person holding such Category 7G certification

For more information, visit the Health Department’s [Water Tank Inspection Reporting web page](#).