



New Hampshire  
Department of Environmental Services

**Guidance to Refine the  
Potable Water Definition in  
New Hampshire Municipal Building Codes**

**Prepared by**  
Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau

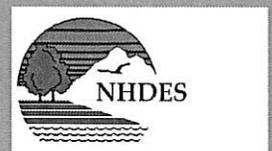
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in New Hampshire Municipal Building Codes**



*Developed through a collaborative effort of the New Hampshire Building Officials Association, NH Health Officers Association, NH Planners Association, and NH Department of Environmental Services.*

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## Purpose and Introduction

This document provides guidance to municipalities that wish to incorporate a refined definition of “potable water” into their building codes. It is a response to inquiries from municipal officials who want to better protect the health of residents who use private wells. This document was developed by the New Hampshire Building Officials Association, New Hampshire Health Officers Association, New Hampshire Planners Association and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

New Hampshire State Building Code requires that every structure equipped with plumbing fixtures and used for human occupancy be provided with a *potable water supply*. The Building Code defines potable water as “*water free from impurities in amounts sufficient to cause disease and harmful physiological effects.*” Interpreting and administering this definition has been difficult for local officials as it does not clearly state which impurities should be considered, nor the amounts in drinking water that cause human health impacts.

To assist local officials responsible for administering this portion of the building code, this document suggests a minimum list of contaminants and corresponding contaminant limits that can be used to refine the potable water definition. When incorporated into a local building code along with a requirement for water testing, *the refined definition of potable water will in some cases require treatment in order to achieve compliance* necessary for local approvals, such as issuance of an occupancy permit.

Beyond the minimum list of contaminants suggested in this document, a number of other contaminants that could cause disease and harmful health effects are often present in well water in New Hampshire. Therefore, *local conditions may warrant water testing and treatment for additional contaminants not on the minimum list*. Language presented in this document provides for municipalities to add contaminants to the minimum list.