



Significant Deficiencies in Public Water Systems

A significant deficiency is a defect in the public water system’s ability to reliably deliver safe drinking water.

What is a Significant Deficiency?

(OAC) 3745-81-01(S)(8) defines a significant deficiency as a defect in design, operation, maintenance, administration, or a failure or malfunction in a system component, including sources, treatment, storage or distribution system that does any of the following: (a) May provide a pathway of entry for microbial or other contamination into the distribution system or that is indicative of a failure in a barrier that is already in place. (b) Causes, or has the potential to cause, an unacceptable risk to health or that could affect the reliable delivery of safe drinking water, as determined by the director.

How Significant Deficiencies are Determined:

Significant deficiencies can be cited at any time, but often come from the evaluation of a public water system (PWS) during a sanitary survey or limited scope site visit.

Significant deficiencies can be determined in 3 ways:

- Situations identified by the above definition
- Situations identified based on a risk assessment
- Situations involving repeat violations where a PWS does not have or follow a corrective action schedule accepted by the Director

Responses to Significant Deficiencies:

A PWS is required to respond in writing to the significant deficiency within 30 days with evidence of correction or a schedule accepted by the director as described in OAC 3745-81-61. If a PWS fails to correct a significant deficiency in accordance with the schedule accepted by the director, a treatment technique violation is issued which requires a public notice be issued within 30 days.

In addition to the above responses, community PWSs that are classified as ground water systems must inform customers of any significant deficiency that is uncorrected at the time of the next consumer confidence report (CCR).

In accordance with OAC Rule 3745-96-02(F)(8) a PWS must include:

- The nature of the significant deficiency.
- The date the significant deficiency was identified by the director (the significant deficiency letter date)
- The director-approved plan and schedule for correction, including interim measures, progress to date.

Where can I get more Information?

For more information, please refer to the rule on treatment technique requirements for significant deficiencies OAC 3745-81-61 or contact your inspector in the appropriate District Office:

Northwest: 419-352-8461

Central: 614-728-3778

Northeast: 330-963-1200

Southwest: 937-285-6357

Southeast: 740-385-8501

What is a Risk Assessment?
<p>A risk assessment is a procedure that evaluates if a situation should be elevated to a significant deficiency.</p> <p>Three main areas of focus are considered in a risk assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the risk of failure or defect? • Is there adequate contingency in place? • If a failure occurs would it result in a significant impact on public health or the delivery of water? <p>The results of these questions will determine if the situation meets the criteria of a significant deficiency.</p>