

Guidance for DHEC Approval of Dispensing Stations & Vending Machines

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The use of water Dispensing or Vending Machines is seen throughout the State, and in recent years their numbers have been increasing. Many citizens throughout the State do use them on a regular basis. The installations of units such as these are often considered by many different groups (e.g., grocery stores, nutrition shops, workout centers, etc.). However, what needs to be known, is that under the State's *Primary Drinking Water Regulations [61-58]*, these units are in fact "public water systems". This means that the State's Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is responsible for ensuring that the construction, installation and operation of these units meets all the requirements of a "public water systems". Therefore, the installation of these units must first be reviewed and approved by the DHEC prior to their installation. Also, the operation of the units once installed must be monitored by DHEC.

The review and approval of "public water systems" has been administered to DHEC under the State regulation 61-58. *Note that Regulations 61-58 through 61-58.11 are promulgated pursuant to S.C. Code Sections 44-55-10 et seq. and are collectively known as the State Primary Drinking Water Regulations.*

Listed below is a collection of terms as defined in the State's *Primary Drinking Water Regulations [R.61-58]*. These terms are important in how they define what a public water system is. It is recommended that each of these be carefully read as they have been extracted from the regulation.

- (42) "Dispensing Station" means a facility where additional treatment is provided to water from an approved public water system, and that treated water is available to the general public. This does not apply to point of use devices in public buildings (e.g., restaurants and cafeterias, etc.).
- (156) "Vending Machine" means any self-service device which upon insertion of a coin, coins, or token, or upon receipt of payment by other means, dispenses unit servings of water in bulk, without the necessity of refilling the machine between each operation.
- (102) "Operator" means a person certified by the South Carolina Environmental Certification Board as being qualified to operate and maintain a public water system. Operation and maintenance responsibilities shall include, but not be limited to, conducting tests of the raw and treated water, adjusting chemical feed rates, and/or operating equipment so as to change the physical, chemical, radiological or bacteriological quality of surface or ground water to meet established standards.
- (106) "Person" means an individual, partnership, co-partnership, cooperative, firm, company, public or private corporation, political subdivision, agency of the State, trust, estate, joint structure company or any other legal entity or their legal representative, agent or assigns.
- (114) "Professional Engineer" means a person properly qualified to perform engineering work as provided in Title 40 of the 1976 Code of Laws of South Carolina, as amended, Chapter 22, Engineers and Land Surveyors.
- (116) "Public Water System" means (1) any public or privately owned waterworks system which provides drinking water, whether bottled or piped, for human consumption, including the source of supply whether the source of supply is of surface or subsurface origin; (2) all structures and appurtenances used for the collection, treatment, storage or distribution of drinking water delivered to consumers; (3) any part or portion of the system and including any water treatment facility which in any way alters the physical, chemical, radiological, or bacteriological characteristics of drinking water; provided, that public water system shall not include a drinking water system serving a single private

residence or dwelling. A separately owned system with its source of supply from another waterworks system shall be a separate public water system.

- (149) "Transient non-community water system" or TWS means a non-community water system that does not regularly serve at least 25 of the same persons over six months per year.
- (100) "Non-community water system" means a public water system which serves at least fifteen (15) service connections or regularly serves an average of at least twenty-five (25) individuals daily at least sixty (60) days out of the year, and does not meet the definition of a community water system.

The first consideration to make when installing a water dispensing/vending machine is whether or not construction will be required. If the intended unit is self-contained and the only work involved is the connection of a water source, drain and power then in most likelihood construction will not be a factor. However, if construction will be required then a construction permit will also be required. It should be known that in most cases this would be more involved for the owner both in time and cost. This will require the submittal of a construction permit as outlined in the regulation 61-58. It is suggested that DHEC be contacted if there is a question on whether a construction permit is needed. If it is determined that a construction permit is needed then it is suggested that the guidance document, *Water Supply Permitting*, be consulted.

However, if the intended unit is self-contained then DHEC will review the project as a simple installation and not as "construction". This requires that anybody desiring to make vended or dispensed water available to the public will obtain approval from DHEC prior to both installation and operation.

It is required that all water dispensing stations or vending machines use water from an already approved "public water system". Each unit, which provides further treatment, will be considered a separate "public water system" and must comply with all applicable requirements for "public water systems". Before any DHEC approval can be issued, technical information on the machines and its treatment equipment must be submitted to the Department for review. This information must include make and model of the various treatment units, rates of filtration, maximum daily output, and method of disinfection along with complete plans and specifications for each machine or treatment unit.

Once the unit is review and considered safe then a conditional approval will be issued for that individual machine. Each machine will be considered a transient non-community water system and must comply with the monitoring requirements of R.61.58.5.

It will be required that DHEC be notified prior to each installation. This notification will require that the location be identified and that a final site inspection be performed. The inspection will consist of verifying the unit, taking samples for bacteriological testing along with insuring that the unit is connected to an already approved water system. Also, note that DHEC must be notified of any unit replacement or relocation.

It is also required that the following conditions be properly provided:

- Each unit must be provided with proper operation and maintenance. This will require all approved units to be monitored by an operator of the appropriate grade at a frequency to ensure proper operation. The frequency of such inspections will be no less than once a week.
- Inspection records must be kept for every visit made by either the operator or maintenance personnel under the direct supervision of the operator. These records must show the date and time of the visit, any tests performed, any maintenance performed, and the signature of the operator or maintenance

personnel. They must be kept by the owner of the vending machine or dispensing station for minimum of two (2) years and made available to the Department upon request.

- A twenty-four (24) hour telephone number must be clearly posted on the front of each unit for use in emergencies or for consumer complaints. A record of any consumer complaints must be kept on file with the owner of the machine for a minimum of three years, and must be made available to the Department upon request.
- Vending machines shall be operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

After reading the above information you should have a much better understanding of the general review and approval process for the various water dispensing and vending machines. It is recommended that you contact DHEC's Water Facilities Permitting Section for information regarding the details of what must be submitted and where, along with any other questions you may have, and check the DHEC website at www.scdhec.net/water.