

Public Health Grading

The purpose of the public health grading of community drinking-water supplies is 'to provide a public statement of the extent to which a community drinking-water supply achieves and can ensure a consistently safe and wholesome product'. This is determined by the extent to which a community drinking-water supply conforms to the *Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand* and whether adequate barriers to potential contamination are in place to minimise risk to public health. Public Health Grading is not an absolute measure of the safety of drinking water at any given point in time.

On behalf of the Ministry of Health, Public Health Units grade drinking water supplies of all communities with greater than 500 people.

The grading has two letters. The first letter (capital) represents the source and treatment grading, while the second letter (lower case) grades the water in the distribution zone (reticulation system)

Source and treatment grading

Assessment based on source and treatment factors will result in a grade:

- A1** Completely satisfactory, negligible level of risk, demonstrably high quality
- A** Completely satisfactory, extremely low level of risk
- B** Satisfactory, very low level of risk when the water leaves the treatment plant
- C** Marginally satisfactory, low level of microbiological risk when the water leaves the treatment plant, but may not be satisfactory chemically.
- D** Unsatisfactory level of risk
- E** Unacceptable level of risk

Distribution zone grading

Assessment based on reticulation condition, management and water quality will result in a grade:

- a1** Completely satisfactory, negligible level of risk, demonstrably high quality
- a** Completely satisfactory, extremely low level of risk
- b** Satisfactory, very low level of risk
- c** Marginally satisfactory, moderate level of risk
- d** Unsatisfactory level of risk
- e** Unacceptable level of risk

Minimum acceptable gradings

Recognising both public health and cost considerations, the following table provides guidance for the minimum gradings acceptable for different sized communities. However, it should be stressed that irrespective of size a community should aim for as high a grade as possible.

Community size	Source and treatment	Distribution
Greater than 10,000	B	a
From 5001 to 10,000	B	b
5000 or less	C	c

[You can find out the public health grade for a drinking water supply on the Drinking Water for New Zealand website.](#)

If a drinking water supply has the letters Uu assigned, this means the supply has not been recently graded by the public health unit as is awaiting a new official grade.

