



Memorandum

To: Public Water System
Owners/Operators

From: Howard P. Isaacs, Administrator, DHHS
Office of Drinking Water & Environmental Health

Steven Goans, P.E., Deputy Director, DEQ
Water Management Division

Re: Notification of Memorandum of Agreement between Health and Human Services and the
Department of Environmental Quality

Date: July 18, 2017

On the reverse side of this letter, you will find a press release statement issued Thursday, July 6, 2017.

This statement reflects a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Environmental Quality.

As noted in this release, this partnership will enhance the efforts of both Programs and ensure improved services to Nebraska's communities.

While the Lincoln based DHHS Drinking Water Program staff will physically move to the Department of Environmental Quality headquarters in the Atrium, all phone numbers will remain the same and all contacts will remain the same.

The main message here is simply...the DHHS Drinking Water Program will function as it has in the past. We will continue to strive to ensure quality customer service and protect the public health of all Nebraskans through compliance with the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act.

Obviously we will be informing you of address changes that will result in such a move.

Please feel free to contact this office at 402-471-0510 if you have questions or concerns.

Issued jointly from the
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 6, 2017

CONTACT
Brian McManus, NDEQ, (402) 471-4223
Kathie Osterman, DHHS, (402) 471-9313

**Integrated DHHS Drinking Water, DEQ Wastewater Efforts
will Streamline Services to Communities**

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services today announced a Memorandum of Agreement to improve coordination of Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act programs. Through the agreement, 24 DHHS staff will move to shared office space with NDEQ wastewater staff effective August 1, 2017, and seven DHHS field staff will begin working with NDEQ field staff.

Governor Pete Ricketts said the agreement is an effective means of ensuring improved services to Nebraska's communities.

"Customized and coordinated community assistance will improve our commitment to protecting public health and great water quality," Ricketts said. "I commend the efforts of NDEQ and HHS to find efficiencies in their operations and to enhance services to Nebraska communities. This new partnership will streamline local government interaction with state regulators, and better support their efforts to grow our state."

NDEQ Director Jim Macy and DHHS Director of the Division of Public Health, Dr. Tom Williams, said that the purpose of the agreement will be to provide more effective, more efficient and customer-focused state government services to Nebraska by unifying similar environmental programs related to wastewater treatment and drinking water systems.

"Locating staff together will better serve our communities in addressing their water infrastructure needs by enhancing state agency coordination," Macy said. "The agencies intend to cross-train staff to ensure complete and timely review of applications and coordinated site assistance. This avoids needless duplication in applications."

Macy and Williams emphasized that the staff from NDEQ will remain employed by NDEQ, and the DHHS employees will remain employed by DHHS. However, by having the two groups working together as an integrated team, communities will benefit by a more coordinated approach in long range water infrastructure planning.

"By integrating staff, we can ensure that the state's focus on safe drinking water is coordinated with other state programs, streamlining our interactions with communities and keeping public safety in the forefront," Williams said. "This approach will also result in enhanced technical assistance and coordination of the financial assistance programs that are available to communities."

Both agencies' field offices will remain at their current locations, but under the agreement, both NDEQ and DHHS field office staff will be cross-trained on drinking water and wastewater programs. This move will not affect DHHS staff responsible for well water contractors, construction standards, and programs such as swimming pool and home loan inspections, as these are separate and distinct activities.