

Summary of the proposed Drinking Water Acceptable Solution for Spring and Bore Drinking Water Supplies

What are Acceptable Solutions?

Acceptable Solutions are a new concept introduced in the Water Services Act 2021 (the Act). They provide owners and operators of some types of drinking water supplies with an approved ready-made option to meet their compliance obligations.

Taumata Arowai developed Acceptable Solutions in collaboration with sector reference groups from various drinking water suppliers across Aotearoa. The reference groups included representatives from rural agricultural water supplies, Federated Farmers, Māori communities and local authorities.

According to the Act a drinking water supplier who complies with an Acceptable Solution (appropriate for their water supply) must be regarded as having complied with the relevant legislative requirements. They still have a duty to supply safe drinking water and to comply with the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards (the Standards).

An Acceptable Solution is not the only means of complying with the legislative requirements applicable to a particular water supply. If a water supplier is unable to apply an Acceptable Solution, they can follow the Drinking Water Quality Assurance Rules (the Rules).

Drinking water suppliers must follow all the requirements and obligations specified in an Acceptable Solution. These cover the design, configuration, installation, operation, maintenance, testing, monitoring, record keeping, emergency management and auditing required.

Water suppliers who adopt an Acceptable Solution are not required to prepare and submit a drinking water safety plan (including a source water risk management plan). However, all drinking water suppliers adopting an Acceptable Solution are still responsible for identifying and managing risks to their water supply and consumers. As such, all drinking water suppliers are encouraged to implement the broad risk management approach that informs the development of a drinking water safety plan and source water risk management plan.

What are spring and bore drinking water supplies?

A spring is groundwater that emerges at the ground's surface.

A bore is a piped (cased) hole constructed to access groundwater for supply purposes. Bores will be at varying depths. Depending on the quantity of water abstracted, some bores will require resource consents.

Both springs and bores require infrastructure to enable the water to be accessed, treated and supplied to consumers as drinking water.

A number of marae, papakāinga, small communities and camping grounds use springs and bores and distribute the drinking water to multiple properties.

It is uncertain how many of these supplies currently exist in New Zealand.

Key criteria for the use of the Acceptable Solution for Spring and Bore Drinking Water Supplies

The Acceptable Solution for Spring and Bore Drinking Water Supplies criteria:

- community drinking water supplies where good quality spring or bore water is abstracted, treated and reticulated to multiple dwellings and buildings
- where the entire population served is less than 500 people and an adequate quantity of water is provided to all connections at peak demand.

The Acceptable Solution sets out the source water testing the supplier must undertake. It also sets out the bore or spring requirements, specifications for treatment systems and requirements for drinking water distribution systems. The Acceptable Solution does not require the use of 'point of entry' household systems that treat water at the point it enters the household or dwelling.

Water suppliers considering using this Acceptable Solution must meet all the criteria described.