



THE STATE OF ALASKA DRINKING WATER PROGRAM PRESENTS

ABOUT OUR WATER

Access to water

Many communities have different methods to get water. Large cities, like Anchorage, have distribution systems. But the water can be more difficult to obtain in isolated places.

Some small towns can use lakes, rivers, springs, or even a rain catching system. Sometimes, these types of places may have more problems with waterborne illnesses because they don't have expensive treatment systems to purify the water.

The pipe in the rock

On the highway to Girdwood, you may have seen a water pipe sticking out from the rock cliff on the side of the road. Many people say that this water is good, but we don't know if it's safe. Drinking water that isn't treated can be risky, because we can't see what's in it. No one knows where this pipe's water source is, and it's important to know the water quality. In reality, the pipe diverts excess water away from the highway to prevent ice accumulation. So, the pipe is for safety, not for drinking!

Groundwater

Alaska has a large quantity of groundwater – that is water found under the surface of the ground. Generally, this water requires less treatment than water from surface waters. About 83% of our public water systems use groundwater. However, many systems in the north do not use this type of water because the earth is frozen and it is very hard to drill for wells for water.

Where do we get our water?

In Anchorage, our main source of water is Lake Eklutna, which also includes Eklutna Glacier. The water is cleaned in the water treatment plant. The facility was built in 1987. The water is very pure and fresh, and is some of the best in the world. Furthermore, Anchorage uses water from Ship Creek and other wells that pump groundwater to supplement the water reserves.

VOCABULARY

Groundwater: Water that is under the surface of the ground.

Contaminant: Something that can contaminate the water, such as a chemical or bacteria and can possibly make people sick

Water treatment: A process that purifies the water and makes it safe to drink. Generally treatment includes filters, chemical disinfection, UV light, aeration, or a combination of some or all.

Public water system: A water system that is regulated by the State of Alaska and the federal government

Distribution system: A system that is comprised of pipes, pumps, valves, and treatment facilities. It brings water to cities, businesses, and homes.

Waterborne illnesses: Illnesses that you can get from some unclean drinking water, typically from microorganisms such as Cryptosporidium Giardia, and others.