

## **KEEPING YOUR DRINKING WATER SAFE**

Today, supplying consumers with safe, high-quality water is no small, simple task.

It requires constant, complex testing of water supplies, careful monitoring and maintenance of the entire water system, strict compliance to an increasing number of federal and state regulations, the expertise of a specially trained professional staff, and the commitment of a conscientious water utility.

To let you know how the Barnstable Fire District Water Department is keeping your drinking water safe, we are explaining some of the specific ways we are protecting our public water supplies around the clock.

### Protecting the Consumer

From the time water is pumped from our wells, until it reaches your faucet, the Water Department takes numerous steps to prevent potential health risks.

Alarms are installed at all well fields and tank sites to detect intruders. Gates and fences are present to stop unauthorized vehicles from driving on or around the watershed area. The Water Department inspects the well fields and surrounding areas daily.

Non-testable backflow devices are installed on most water meters in residences. Businesses that use or manufacture substances that could pose a health risk if they are siphoned (or "back flow") into the public water supply are required to have a testable backflow device. These devices are tested yearly by a state-certified staff member.

The Water Department regularly monitors the District's water supplies for potentially harmful contaminants. Tests are conducted monthly for bacteria and quarterly for volatile organic compounds (substances such as solvents). In addition, a complete chemical analysis of the water supply is conducted each year. As an extra measure of consumer protection, the Department takes additional samples for bacteria and

more frequent samples for volatile organic compounds than required by federal and state regulations.

The Department has been regularly monitoring the District's water supplies for all currently regulated contaminants for several years – long before such monitoring was required by the federal government. These samples are taken at well sites and at several points throughout the distribution system, and then analyzed at a state-certified laboratory. The results are submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for evaluation and to the Water Department for permanent records.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set stringent standards for contaminants that can cause illness or disease. If these standards are exceeded, a water utility must notify its consumers. When violations pose a high risk to public health, consumers must be advised through mailed, newspaper, and broadcast notices about what corrective action the utility has implemented and what steps the consumer can take to minimize health risks.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection requires all water systems to be operated by a licensed professional, educated and trained in water supply and distribution. This operator is licensed by the state, according to his/her education and experience. The operator of the District's water system holds a license one grade higher than required.