

Frequently Asked Questions – Source Water Susceptibility Assessments

Q 1. What is a source water susceptibility assessment (SWSA)?

The source water susceptibility assessments are reports of the susceptibility of public water systems to 227 drinking water contaminants. The results include a rating of High, Medium or Low for each of the contaminants.

Q 2. Why did TCEQ do this work?

The assessment reports were federally mandated under the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996.

Q 3. How is a public water supply (PWS) system's susceptibility determined?

Susceptibility is determined through the use of geographic information system (GIS) software. Assessments are based on six major assessment components:

1. Identification of the source of water,
2. Delineation of the area contributing water to the source,
3. Determination of natural properties which contribute to susceptibility,
4. Evaluation of non-point source contaminants,
5. Evaluation of point source contaminants, and
6. Inclusion of contaminant detections above a TCEQ threshold concentration from water quality monitoring sites

Q 4. Why is the report so long?

The first portion of the report shows the summary of the system's susceptibility assessment as a whole and the end of the report shows each source's susceptibility assessment, as well as maps used in the assessments.

Q 5. What does point source contamination mean?

These are contaminants that can be traced back to a specific point or place, such as gasoline from and underground storage tank at a gas station.

Q 6. What does non-point source contamination mean?

These are contaminants that can originate from multiple points and are difficult to be traced back to a specific location, such as pesticides draining from suburban lawns after a rainfall.

Q 7. Our water system received a HIGH susceptibility to one or more contaminants, is there a public health threat?

NO. A HIGH susceptibility means there are activities near the source water and the natural conditions of the aquifer or watershed make the source susceptible to this contaminant. If contaminant levels above allowable limits have been detected for your water system, you would receive a separate notification.

Q 8. Are some of the contaminants in the assessment related to the treatment process?

YES.

Q 9. How should a PWS system use the results of the SWSA for their system?

The results of the assessments should be used as guidelines in implementing source water protection measures. A summary of the results will be included in the Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR).

Q 10. What information should be included in the CCR?

Reporting requirements of the assessment results will be included in the CCR guidance and template to be sent out in spring/summer 2024. As a minimum, all systems will have to report that the assessment is complete. General information such as which aquifer or reservoirs are used is required by the CCR.

Q 11. The results of the SWSA indicate a water system is "highly susceptible" to certain contaminants. How do I figure out which contaminants?

The section labeled "Source Details" lists high susceptibility rated contaminants by water source, as well as a map showing potential sources that are potential sources of contamination.

Q 12. If the data used in calculating the susceptibility rating of our water system is inaccurate, (inaccurate data may include: locations of wells or intakes, well depth, pumping rate, etc.), can the assessment be recalculated?

YES. Although every effort has been made to obtain accurate data prior to the assessment, water systems may identify inaccuracies and submit corrections along with documentation.

Q 13. Our water system could not find the well logs for our well. What does that mean?

Well log information, along with aquifer information, is used to determine the capture zone for each well. If this information is missing, a ½ mile radius circle is used to represent the capture zone.

Q 14. This report shows the presence of potential sources of contamination (PSOC) near my source, but I know they don't exist. What should I do?

Note any discrepancies in the report and provide documentation supporting your position. Discrepancies will be evaluated and the assessment can be performed again using the newly acquired data.

Q 15. How can I verify the structural integrity of my well? There are no records available from the driller or the previous owner.

An engineer or other professional can be hired to perform a down-hole video survey to document the screened interval and a cement bond log to determine the annular cement. This can be done the next time your pump is pulled for servicing.

Q 16. How will contaminant susceptibility ratings affect a PWS system?

Susceptibility ratings will allow PWS systems to focus source water protection efforts on potential sources of contamination. You can also use this information to select future well sites that have fewer potential sources of contamination.

Q 17. Our system purchases treated water from another public water system. Is this information included in our assessment?

NO. The assessments only use wells or intakes identified during TCEQ inspections as

Q 18. Where can I find more information on these contaminants and their effects on water quality standards?

Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) website where you will find information about contaminants and water quality standards. Contact the EPA at the following website:

www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/national-primary-drinking-water-regulations

Q 19. What is the difference between "source susceptibility" and "system susceptibility"?

For PWS systems with multiple source waters, the assessment software assess each individual drinking water source, producing

a report for each well or intake. The overall system susceptibility report is an average of all the individual water source assessments.

Q 20. Do I have to send copies of the assessment reports to all of my customers?

NO. You should, however, understand the results well enough to explain them to your customers.

Q 21. The assessments make use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) incorporating geographical data. Is this data available to the public?

YES. Contact the Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Team at SWPDATA@tceq.texas.gov to obtain this data.

Q 22. How does a water system go about implementing source water protection measures?

A water system can enroll in the Source Water Protection (SWP) Program. Guidance explaining requirements of membership in the SWP program is available at:
https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/SWAP/index_swp.html

Q 23. I can't understand this report. It's too technical and I don't know what it means.

Take your time, write down questions you have regarding the report and send them to TCEQ for review.