

Use of boiled rainwater in food premises

All water that is used for human consumption including the preparation of food must be drinking water quality. Bringing water to a boil disinfects rainwater and can be an appropriate method of ensuring microbiological safety where only small amounts of rainwater are being used to prepare or produce food

Safe Drinking Water Act

The Safe Drinking Water Act applies to all food premises that supply rainwater as drinking water to members of the public. The Act defines drinking water as water that is intended for human consumption or is used for purposes connected with human consumption (such as the washing, preparation or cooking of food)..

Rainwater as drinking water

Rainwater is generally safe for most people to drink however sometimes it may be microbiologically compromised and have a lower microbial quality than mains water. This is particularly common after rainfall where *E.coli* levels are sometimes elevated.

Exemption for regulated food premises using boiled rainwater

An exemption from the requirements of the Act applies to small, regulated food premises such as roadhouses and cafes that use very low volumes of boiled rainwater for making tea and coffee and for a limited amount of food preparation. The exemption does not apply to the use of rainwater at regulated care or education premises.

Boiling procedure

Boiling rainwater for food preparation should only be undertaken where manageable and where only small volumes of rainwater are required on a daily basis.

Boiling is an effective method of disinfection against harmful microorganisms. Boiling does not have to be maintained for any length of time – kettles with automatic shut-offs are suitable for this purpose. The water can then be cooled and stored in a labelled, clean container until use. Water should be allowed to cool without the use of ice.

For the preparation of tea and coffee it is not necessary to pre-boil water. Un-boiled rainwater may be used for this application

Use of large volumes of rainwater

For food premises using larger volumes of rainwater e.g. greater than 20 L per day, boiling will not be practical. Food premises in this category are subject to the requirements of the Act. This includes registering with the Department for Health and Ageing as a drinking water provider and completing and implementing a risk management plan. More information can be found in the fact sheet '[Application of the Safe Drinking Water Act to food premises](#)'.



For more information

Public Health Services
SA Health
1st floor, Citi Centre Building
11 Hindmarsh Square
Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: 08 8226 7100
waterquality@sa.gov.au
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

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Exemptions

Some types of drinking water supplies are exempt from the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2011* (the Act). These include drinking water collected or recovered at domestic homes (e.g. rainwater or bore water), rainwater supplied at low risk premises, optional rainwater supplies, discretionary sources of water at recreational parks and reserves and rainwater supplies in small regulated food premises that is boiled prior to use

The Act is designed to provide a practical and cost effective approach to ensuring safety of drinking water supplied to the public. Including exemptions for individual domestic supplies and water supplies identified as low risk is consistent with this aim and in the case of rainwater tanks is consistent with existing SA Government policy.

Private domestic supplies

Rainwater collected in domestic tanks and groundwater recovered from a private bore and used on-site are exempt from the Act.

Users of rainwater are advised to maintain their tank and roof catchment to minimise potential health risks by following guidance provided in the [Fact Sheet Rainwater tanks: maintenance and water care](#).

Users of bore water are advised that the water should be tested before being used for drinking or food preparation to ensure that it is suitable for these uses. Further advice is provided in the [Fact Sheet: Using bore water safely](#).

Rainwater at low risk premises

Rainwater collected and used at low risk premises is exempt from the Act subject to notification of potential users about the source of the drinking water supply. This is consistent with Government policy that drinking rainwater collected in well maintained tanks is generally safe for most people but the decision to drink it remains a matter of personal choice.

Low risk premises include short term accommodation buildings (including bed and breakfast, hotels, caravan parks, camping grounds), recreational or community centres and church and council buildings. However, the exemption does not apply where food or beverages are prepared and provided for sale or supply at Cafés, restaurants, retail food or beverage businesses or licensed premises. The exemption also does not apply at premises that are more likely to provide services to people who could be more vulnerable to infection including the aged and children. These include regulated care or educational facilities such as hospitals, health services, aged care, child care, pre-school and primary and secondary schools.

Notification to potential users of rainwater includes signage on kitchen and bathroom taps and provision of advice in promotional material advertising services. A recommended sign (from Australian Standard AS/NZS 3500 Plumbing and Drainage) is shown below. Copies of this sign can be accessed from www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/safedinkingwateract.



Premises eligible for exemption can also choose to be regulated under the Act. Some premises may consider there are advantages in being able to demonstrate compliance with the Act and being listed as a registered drinking water provider.

Boiled rainwater

A notice was published on 5 February, 2015 in Issue 10 of the Government Gazette exempting from the Act the use of boiled rainwater by small, regulated food premises. This exemption affects small, regulated food premises such as roadhouses and cafes that use very low volumes of boiled rainwater for making tea and coffee and for a limited amount of food preparation. The exemption does not apply to the use of rainwater at regulated care or education premises. Further advice is provided in the [Fact sheet: Use of boiled rainwater in food premises](#).

Optional rainwater supplies

Some premises supply rainwater as an optional alternative to mains water. In most cases where this occurs the rainwater supply is exempt from the Act. The exceptions are that taps supplying rainwater should not be accessible to people receiving care at health facilities (such as hospitals, aged care) or to pre-school and school children. In addition the exemption does not apply where food or beverages are prepared and provided for sale or supply at cafés, restaurants, retail food or beverage businesses or licensed premises. Exemptions are subject to similar notification requirements described above for rainwater at low risk premises.

Discretionary supplies in parks and reserves

Discretionary supplies of rainwater, bore water and well water are provided in some open space parks, reserves and walking trails. These supplies are a useful resource but availability is not an essential requirement for use of the parks and may not be available year round. It is reasonable to expect that campers or hikers would make personal provisions for access to drinking water when visiting these outdoor areas.

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