

# Chlorinating water supplies

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Press Release: Queenstown Lakes District Council

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On the back of the Havelock North water contamination crisis earlier this year and after advice from Public Health South, the Queenstown Lakes District Council has made the decision to proactively chlorinate three small community water supplies this summer.

Wanaka and Queenstown supplies are already chlorinated.

Now QLDC is giving early notice that the water supplies of Arrowtown, Hawea and Glendhu Bay will also be chlorinated over the summer, as a precaution to ensure the safety of residents and visitors over the busy tourist season. Each of these supplies have previously been contaminated during peak summer demand, which has led to emergency chlorination.

The plan is to chlorinate these small schemes from mid-December through to the end of March 2017. Installation of chlorination delivery systems is scheduled to start from 12 December and chlorination of water supplies will likely begin that week.

During the Havelock North water contamination event over 5000 people became sick with waterborne gastrointestinal illness, causing Public Health South to request that local territorial authorities consider chlorination and other treatment measures.

QLDC has subsequently reviewed the risks to the public surrounding unchlorinated supplies within the district and, after seeking expert medical and legal advice, has decided on the temporary summer measures. Further, the Council is investigating the possibility of permanently chlorinating all residential water supplies in 2017.

QLDC Chief Engineer Ulrich Glasner sees chlorination a necessary precaution. "Our communities are entitled to safe drinking water. There is both the expectation and legal requirement that the water for residents and visitors alike is safe to drink. We are not prepared to take any risk."

Medical Officer of Health for Public Health South, Dr Derek Bell fully supports the QLDC decision and agrees that chlorinating the water supplies is a responsible step. "Chlorine provides one of the most effective ways of treating water because it disinfects the water all the way from the source through to homes and businesses. Chlorine kills small bugs that can get through filtration systems such as bacteria and viruses that cannot be physically removed from water."

While a decision has yet to be made on permanent chlorination of all supplies in the District, this is something the council is looking at closely, says QLDC Chief Executive Mike Theelen. "Ultimately we have a responsibility to provide safe drinking water and we are obligated to learn from the Havelock experience."

"An event of that magnitude in the Queenstown Lakes District would be very damaging on a local level, in terms of the effects to residents, but also seriously damaging to the region's tourism sector. While the water in Queenstown and Wanaka is already chlorinated, it would be irresponsible of the Council not to consider the potential of permanent chlorination of all our water supplies."

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