

GUIDELINES FOR CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER COOLERS

Frequency of Cleaning

It is recommended that water coolers be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected with every bottle change.

Cleaning the Water Cooler

1. Disconnect the water cooler from the electrical outlet.
2. Remove the empty water bottle and completely drain the remaining water through the spigots.
3. Remove the “no-spill” guard and baffle (if applicable) – take care not to break or damage these components. These items can be cleaned in a dishwasher or manually in the kitchen sink.
4. Prepare a disinfectant solution. In a large, clean, food-grade container dilute 15 mL (1 Tablespoon) of non-perfumed bleach (~5% chlorine) into 5 L of clean warm water. Fill the reservoir with the disinfectant solution and scrub the interior of the reservoir with a clean long-handled, soft-bristled brush.
5. Drain some of the disinfectant solution through the spigots, and allow the solution to sit for at least 2 minutes (to be effective) but no longer than 5 minutes (to prevent corrosion).
6. Drain the disinfectant solution from the reservoir through the spigots, into a bucket, and dispose of the solution into the sanitary system.
7. Rinse the reservoir thoroughly by filling it with clean tap water or bottled water 2-3 times. Drain the rinse water through the spigots into a bucket and dispose into the sanitary system. Rinsing the reservoir will remove traces of the disinfectant.
8. Replace the baffle and the “no-spill” guard.
9. Place water bottle on top of water cooler.
10. Depress spigots until the water flows freely.
11. Connect the water cooler to the electrical outlet.

Note: this procedure is most easily performed when replacing an empty water bottle.

Cleaning Plastic Parts

1. Periodic cleaning of the drip tray, spigot paddles, “no-spill” guard, baffles, and the exterior of the water cooler is recommended. This should be done when the water cooler is cleaned and disinfected. Removable parts can be cleaned in a dishwasher (see manufacturer’s instructions) or manually.
2. All removable parts should be washed in hot soapy water, rinsed with clean water and then disinfected using a disinfectant solution (see Step 4).
3. Allow the parts to thoroughly dry, or dry with a clean cloth.

4. The exterior of the water cooler should be thoroughly wiped with a clean hot soapy cloth.
5. Do not use abrasive cleansers, which can scratch surfaces.

Maintenance

1. At regular intervals, inspect the wire grid located across the back of the water cooler for lint and dust build up. Vacuum or clean with a brush. Regular cleaning will help to keep the cooler running efficiently and economically.
2. The compressor is hermetically sealed and requires no lubrication. Most units are also fitted with an automatic reset overload protection switch.
3. Disconnect the water cooler from the electrical outlet whenever it is out of water.

Note: always disconnect the water cooler from the power supply before any cleaning or performing other activities with the cooler.

Inappropriate Bottled Water Uses

Because bottled water normally contains low numbers of bacteria, it is recommended that you:

- Do not use bottled water to clean contact lenses.
- Do not use bottled water for infants less than 4 months old (unless boiled for 1 minute first).
- Do not use bottled water if you are a member of any immune deficient population (unless boiled for 1 minute first).

Bottled Water Hygiene

Wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap after using the washroom, after handling dirty items, and always BEFORE touching water containers. Water coolers can become contaminated with bacteria that originate from non-sanitary practices.

Do not touch the end of the water cooler spigots with your hands or any items that have come in contact with your mouth (glasses, cups, small water bottles, etc.).

Replacing a Water Bottle on a Water Cooler

1. Wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap before handling the “new” bottles.
2. Remove the empty water bottle.
3. Wipe the neck and shoulder of the “new” bottle with a clean hot soapy cloth, and also wipe the top of the water cooler and the lip of the reservoir.
4. Remove the cap or seal from the “new” bottle and place it on the cooler, centering the bottle on the “no-spill” probe tip.

For more information, contact your Public Health Inspector at 403-943-8096.

Source: Technical Advisory Committee on Safe Drinking Water, Environmental Public Health Field Manual for Private, Public and Communal Drinking Water Systems in Alberta, 2nd Edition, 2004