

North Carolina has water safety problem

March 27 2006

North Carolina reportedly is not adequately protecting the state's residents from unsafe drinking water containing arsenic, bacteria or other contaminants.

Jessica Miles, chief of the North Carolina Public Water Supply Section's 98 employees, says she has been overwhelmed trying to monitor safety tests required of nearly 7,000 public water systems, the Raleigh (N.C.) News & Observer reported Monday. She said thousands of small systems are not performing testing and the state has been unable to force compliance.

North Carolina has more public water systems than any other Southern state and double the national average, the newspaper said, noting most are small mom-and-pop operations serving a few dozen to a few hundred people in rural areas.

Miles says more than 40 percent of North Carolina's 6.5 million public water system customers drank water last year that had not been properly tested for various contaminants or, if the water was tested, it flunked.

Miles told the News & Observer she has confidence in the large public water systems, but if she were on the road in a rural area she might not drink from a water fountain.

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Citation: North Carolina has water safety problem (2006, March 27) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-03-north-carolina-safety-problem.html>

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