
Potable water — Specification



Table of contents

1	Scope	1
2	Normative references	1
3	Terms and definitions	3
4	Requirements	4
4.1	General requirements	4
4.2	Specific requirements	4
5	Contaminants	5
5.1	Inorganic contaminants.....	5
5.2	Organic contaminants.....	5
5.3	Radioactive materials	6
6	Microbiological requirements.....	6
7	Sampling.....	7
7.1	General	7
7.2	Parameters required for minimum monitoring	8
	Annex A (informative) Guidelines for water safety plans	9
	Bibliography	11

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Potable water — Specification

1 Scope

This African standard specifies requirements, sampling and test methods for potable water intended for direct human consumption, domestic and industrial use.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ARS 53, *General principles of food hygiene — Code of practice*

ARS 56, *Pre-packaged Foods — Labelling*

ASTM D3871-84, *Standard test method for purgeable organic compounds in water using headspace sampling*

ASTM D5907-13, *Standard test methods for filterable matter (total dissolved solids) and non-filterable matter (total suspended solids) in water*

ASTM D6239-09, *Standard test method for uranium in drinking water by high-resolution alpha-liquid-scintillation spectrometry*

ISO 5961, *Water quality — Determination of cadmium by atomic absorption spectrometry*

ISO 6059, *Water quality — Determination of the sum of calcium and magnesium — EDTA titrimetric method*

ISO 6222, *Water quality — Enumeration of culturable microorganisms — Colony count by inoculation in nutrient agar culture media*

ISO 6332, *Water quality — Determination of iron-spectrometric method using 1, 10-phenanthroline*

ISO 6333, *Water quality — Determination of manganese — Formaldoxime spectrometric method*

ISO 6461-2, *Water quality — Detection and enumeration of the spores of sulphite-reducing anaerobes (clostridia) — Part 2: Method by membrane filtration*

ISO 6703-1, *Water quality — Determination of cyanide — Part 1: Determination of total cyanide*

ISO 6777, *Water quality — Determination of nitrite — Molecular absorption spectrometric method*

ISO 7027(all parts), *Water quality — Determination of turbidity*

ISO 7393-3, *Water quality — Determination of free chlorine and total chlorine — Part 3: Iodometric titration method for the determination of total chlorine*

ISO 7887, *Water quality — Determination of colour*

ISO 7888, *Water quality — Determination of electrical conductivity*

ISO 7890-3, *Water quality — Determination of nitrate — Part 3: Spectrometric method using sulfosalicylic acid*

DARS 2232:2026

ISO 7899-2, *Water quality — Detection and enumeration of intestinal enterococci — Part 2: Membrane filtration method*

ISO 7980, *Water quality — Determination of calcium and magnesium — Atomic absorption spectrometric method*

ISO 8165 (all parts), *Water quality — Determination of selected monovalent phenols*

ISO 8245, *Water quality — Guidelines for the determination of total organic carbon (TOC) and dissolved organic carbon (DOC)*

ISO 8288, *Water quality — Determination of cobalt, nickel, copper, zinc, cadmium and lead — Flame atomic absorption spectrometric methods*

ISO 9174, *Water quality — Determination of chromium — Atomic absorption spectrometric methods*

ISO 9297, *Water quality — Determination of chloride — Silver nitrate titration with chromate indicator (Mohr's method)*

ISO 9308-1, *Water quality — Enumeration of Escherichia coli and coliform bacteria — Part 1: Membrane filtration method for waters with low bacterial background flora*

ISO 9308-2, *Water quality — Enumeration of Escherichia coli and coliform bacteria — Part 2: Most probable number method*

ISO 9390, *Water quality — Determination of borate — Spectrometric method using azomethine-H*

ISO 9696, *Water quality — Gross alpha activity — Test method using thick source method*

ISO 9697, *Water quality — Gross beta activity — Test method using thick source method*

ISO 9964-1, *Water quality — Determination of sodium and potassium — Part 1: Determination of sodium by atomic absorption spectrometry*

ISO 9964-2, *Water quality — Determination of sodium and potassium — Part 2: Determination of potassium by atomic absorption spectrometry*

ISO 10301, *Water quality — Determination of highly volatile halogenated hydrocarbons — Gas chromatographic methods*

ISO 10359-2, *Water quality — Determination of fluoride — Part 2: Determination of inorganically bound total fluoride after digestion and distillation*

ISO 10523, *Water quality — Determination of pH*

ISO 11423-2, *Water quality — Determination of benzene and some derivatives — Part 2: Method using extraction and gas chromatography*

ISO 11731, *Water quality — Enumeration of Legionella*

ISO 11732, *Water quality — Determination of ammonium nitrogen — Method by flow analysis (CFA and FIA) and spectrometric detection*

ISO 11885, *Water quality — Determination of selected elements by inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometry (ICP-OES)*

ISO 11923, *Water quality — Determination of suspended solids by filtration through glass-fibre filters*

ISO 11969, *Water quality — Determination of arsenic — Atomic absorption spectrometric method (hydride technique)*

ISO 12020, *Water quality — Determination of aluminium — Atomic absorption spectrometric methods*

ISO 12846, *Water quality — Determination of mercury — Method using atomic absorption spectrometry (AAS) with and without enrichment*

ISO 14402, *Water quality — Determination of phenol index by flow analysis (FIA and CFA)*

ISO 14911, *Water quality — Determination of dissolved Li⁺, Na⁺, NH₄⁺, K⁺, Mn²⁺, Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺, Sr²⁺ and Ba²⁺ using ion chromatography — Method for water and waste water*

ISO 15061, *Water quality — Determination of dissolved bromate — Method by liquid chromatography of ions*

ISO 15089, *Water quality — Guidelines for selective immunoassays for the determination of plant treatment and pesticide agents*

ISO 15553, *Water quality — Isolation and identification of Cryptosporidium oocysts and Giardia cysts from water*

ISO 15681 (all parts), *Water quality — Determination of orthophosphate and total phosphorus contents by flow analysis (FIA and CFA)*

ISO 16265, *Water quality — Determination of the methylene blue active substances (MBAS) index — Method using continuous flow analysis (CFA)*

ISO 16266, *Water quality — Detection and enumeration of Pseudomonas aeruginosa — Method by membrane filtration*

ISO 19250, *Water quality — Detection of Salmonella spp.*

ISO 21567, *Microbiology of food and animal feeding stuffs — Horizontal method for the detection of Shigella spp.*

ISO 22743, *Water quality — Determination of sulfates — Method by continuous flow analysis (CFA)*

ISO 28540, *Water quality — Determination of 16 polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) in water — Method using gas chromatography with mass spectrometric detection (GC-MS)*

ISO/TS 17379-2, *Water quality — Determination of selenium — Part 2: Method using hydride generation atomic absorption spectrometry (HG-AAS)*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

potable water

water that is safe and suitable for human consumption

3.2

treated potable water

water that has undergone through processes such as flocculation, coagulation, sedimentation, filtration and disinfection

3.3

natural potable water

water that is from natural sources that is fit for human consumption without undergoing any form of treatment which will alter its original physico-chemical characteristics and bacteriological purity

3.4

water quality

chemical, physical and biological characteristics of water in respect to suitability for human consumption

3.6

surveillance

independent continuous, specific measurement, observation and reporting for the purpose of water quality management and operational activities

3.7

disinfection

reduction by means of chemical agents and/or physical methods, of the number of micro-organisms to a level that does not compromise public health

3.8

distribution system

public or private water system providing consumers with tap water suitable for direct consumption

3.9

water supply

source of water that has been inspected and approved by the competent authority for human consumption

4 Requirements

4.1 General requirements

4.1.1 Potable water shall:

- a) be free from pathogenic organisms;
- b) not contain chemical substances in amounts that are hazardous and injurious to human health;
- c) not have objectionable taste or odour to the consumers; and
- d) be free from any foreign matter.

4.1.2 The location, construction, operation and supervision of water supply source, its reservoirs and its distribution system shall be such that they exclude any possible pollution of the water.

4.2 Specific requirements

Potable water shall comply with the physico-chemical requirements given in Table 1 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein.

Table 1 — Physico-chemical requirements for potable water

S/No.	Parameter	Requirement		Test method
		Treated potable water	Natural potable water	
i.	Colour, TCU ^a , max.	15	50	ISO 7887
ii.	Turbidity, NTU, max.	5	25	ISO 7027 (all parts)
iii.	pH	6.5 – 8.5	5.5 – 9.5	ISO 10523
iv.	Conductivity, $\mu\text{S/cm}$, max.	1500	2500	ISO 7888
v.	Suspended matter, mg/l	Not detectable	Not detectable	ISO 11923
vi.	Total dissolved solids, mg/l, max.	1000	1500	ASTM D5907
vii.	Total hardness, as CaCO_3 , mg/l, max.	300	600	ISO 6059
viii.	Aluminium (Al), mg/l, max.	0.2	0.2	ISO 12020
ix.	Chloride (Cl), mg/l, max.	250	250	ISO 9297
x.	Total Iron, (Fe), mg/l, max.	0.3	0.3	ISO 6332
xi.	Sodium (Na), mg/l, max.	200	200	ISO 9964-1
xii.	Sulphate (SO_4^{2-}), mg/l, max.	400	400	ISO 22743
xiii.	Zinc (Zn), mg/l, max.	5	5	ISO 8288
xiv.	Magnesium (Mg), mg/l, max.	100	100	ISO 7980
xv.	Calcium (Ca), mg/l, max.	150	150	ISO 7980
xvi.	Potassium (K), mg/l, max.	50	50	ISO 9964-2

^a True colour units (TCU) mean hazen units after filtration.

5 Contaminants

5.1 Inorganic contaminants

Potable water shall comply with the limits for inorganic contaminants given in Table 2 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein.

Table 2 — Limits for inorganic contaminants in natural and treated potable water

S/No.	Inorganic contaminant	Maximum limit mg/l		Test method
		Treated potable water	Natural potable water	
i.	Arsenic, (As)	0.01	0.01	ISO 11969
ii.	Cadmium, (Cd)	0.003	0.003	ISO 5961
iii.	Lead, (Pb)	0.01	0.01	ISO 8288
iv.	Copper, (Cu)	1.000	1.000	ISO 8288
v.	Mercury (total as Hg)	0.001	0.001	ISO 12846
vi.	Manganese, (Mn)	0.1	0.1	ISO 6333
vii.	Selenium, (Se)	0.01	0.01	ISO/TS 17379-2
viii.	Ammonia, (NH ₃)	0.5	0.5	ISO 11732
ix.	Chromium Total, (Cr)	0.05	0.05	ISO 9174
x.	Nickel, (Ni)	0.02	0.02	ISO 8288
xi.	Cyanide, (CN)	0.01	0.01	ISO 6703
xii.	Barium, (Ba)	0.7	0.7	ISO 14911
xiii.	Nitrates (NO ₃ -N)	45	45	ISO 7890-3
xiv.	Boron, (Boric acid)	2.4	2.4	ISO 9390
xv.	Fluoride, (F)	1.5	1.5	ISO 10359
xvi.	Bromate, (BrO ₃)	0.01	0.01	ISO 15061
xvii.	Nitrites (NO ₂ -N)	0.9	0.9	ISO 6777
xviii.	Molybdenum (Mo)	0.07	0.07	ISO 11885
xix.	Phosphates, (PO ₄ ³⁻)	2.2	2.2	ISO 15681 (all parts)
xx.	Residual Chlorine	0.2 - 0.5 ^a	Absent	ISO 7393-3
xxi.	Uranium	0.03	0.03	ASTM D6239-09

^a Under conditions of epidemic diseases, it may be necessary to increase the residual chlorine temporarily.

5.2 Organic contaminants

Potable water shall comply with the limits for organic contaminants affecting safety given in Table 3 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein.

Table 3 — Limits for organic contaminants in treated and natural potable water

S/No.	Organic contaminant	Maximum limit, µg/L	Test method
i.	<u>Aromatics</u>		
	Benzene	10	ISO 11423
	Toluene	700	
	Xylene	500	
	Polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbon	0.7	ISO 28540
ii.	<u>Chlorinated Alkanes and Alkenes</u>		
	Carbon tetrachloride	2	ISO 10301
	1,2-Dichloroethane	30	
	1,1-Dichloroethylene	0.3	
	1,1-Dichloroethene	30	
Tetrachloroethene	40		
iii.	<u>Phenolic substances</u>		
	Phenols	2	ISO 8165 (all parts)
	2,4,6-Trichlorophenol	200	ISO 14402
iv.	<u>Trihalomethanes</u>		
	Chloroform	30	ASTM D3871-84
v.	<u>Pesticides</u>		
	Aldrin/Dieldrin	0.03	ISO 15089
	Chlordane (total)	0.3	
	2,4- Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid	30	
	DDT (total)	1	
	Heptachlor and Heptachlor Epoxide	0.03	
	Hexachlorobenzene	1	
	Lindane BHC	2	
Methoxychlor	20		
vi.	Surfactants (reacting with methylene Blue)	200	ISO 16265
vii.	Organic matter	3	ISO 8245

5.3 Radioactive materials

Potable water shall comply with the limits for radioactive materials given in Table 4 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein.

Table 4 — Limits for radioactive materials in potable water

S/No.	Radioactive material	Maximum limit, Bq/L	Test method
i.	Gross alpha activity	0.5	ISO 9696
ii.	Gross beta activity	1	ISO 9697

6 Microbiological requirements

6.1 Potable water shall be handled under hygienic conditions in accordance with ARS 53.

NOTE Guidelines for water safety plans are given in Annex A.

6.2 Potable water shall comply with the microbiological limits given in Table 5 when tested in accordance with the test methods specified therein.

Table 5 — Microbiological limits for potable water

S/ No	Microorganism	Limit	Test method
i.	Total viable counts at 22 °C, CFU/ml, max. ^a	100	ISO 6222
	Total viable counts at 37 °C, CFU/ml, max. ^a	50	
ii.	Total coliforms, CFU/100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 9308-1 ISO 9308-2
iii.	<i>Escherichia coli</i> , CFU/100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 9308-1 ISO 9308-2
iv.	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , CFU/100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 6888-1
v.	Sulphite reducing anaerobes, CFU/100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 6461-2
vi.	<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> fluorescence, CFU/100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 16266
vii.	<i>Enterococcus faecalis</i> , CFU/100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 7899-2
viii.	<i>Shigella</i> , per 100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 21567
ix.	<i>Salmonella</i> , per 100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 19250
x.	<i>Giardia</i> , per 100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 15553
xi.	<i>Cryptosporidium</i> , per 100 ml	Not detectable	
xii.	<i>Legionella spp</i> , per 100 ml	Not detectable	ISO 11731

^a This parameter is for monitoring the system at source/processing facility. Determination of total viable counts shall start within 6 h of collection. If this is not practical, the sample shall be preserved at 4 °C for not more than 6 h and analysed within 12 h from the time of collection.

7 Sampling

7.1 General

Sampling shall be done in accordance with Table 6.

Table 6 — Minimum frequency of sampling of water for surveillance

Population served (P)	Frequency ^a (minimum) of sampling
P >100 000	10 samples every month per 100 000 of population served
25 001 – 100 000	10 samples every month
10 001 – 25 000	3 samples every month
2 500 – 10 000	2 samples every month
P <2 500	1 sample every month

^a During the rainy season or epidemics and emergencies, sampling should be carried out more frequently.

7.2 Parameters required for minimum monitoring

Analysis of the parameters in Table 7 may be deemed acceptable for the purpose of indicating ongoing levels of operational efficiency in a water treatment plant. However, a relevant authority may require additional tests.

Table 7 — Parameters required for minimum monitoring

S/ No.	Parameter	Test method
i.	Taste	Organoleptic test
ii.	Odour	
iii.	Conductivity or dissolved solids	Table 1
iv.	Colour	
v.	Turbidity	
vi.	pH value	
vii.	Aluminium	
viii.	Iron(total)	
ix.	Fluoride as F-	
x.	Nitrates (NO ₃ -N)	
xi.	Nitrites (NO ₂ -N)	
xii.	Ammonia	
xiii.	Residual Chlorine ^a	
xiv.	Total coliforms or E. coli	Table 4
xv.	Total viable counts	
^a Only applicable to treated potable water		

If abnormal results are encountered in any of these analyses, sampling frequency shall be increased and/or additional analyses carried out.

A consumer complaints register for the aesthetic qualities of the water should be maintained.

Annex A (informative)

Guidelines for water safety plans

A.1 General

Potable water systems operators should develop, implement and maintain a water safety plan taking into consideration the potential risks to the safety of the water from the supply catchment area to the consumer.

A.2 Key components of water safety plan

A water safety plan should consist of three key components:

- a) system assessment to determine whether the potable water supply chain (up to the point of consumption) as a whole can deliver water of a quality that meets health-based targets;
- b) identifying control measures in a potable water system that will collectively control identified risks and ensure that the health-based targets are met; and
- c) management plans describing actions to be taken during normal operation or incident conditions and documenting the system assessment (including upgrade and improvement), monitoring and communication plans and supporting programmes.

A.3 Water safety plan

A water safety plan should include:

- a) measures to protect the source of potable water from risks of pollution;
- b) measures to ensure all installations intended for the production of potable water exclude any possibility of contamination. For this purpose and in particular:
 - (i) the installation for collection, the pipes and the reservoirs should be made from materials suited to the water and in such a way as to prevent the introduction of foreign substances in water; and
 - (ii) the equipment and its use for production should meet hygienic requirements;
- c) measures to ensure an appropriate treatment such as pre-treatment processes, coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation, filtration and disinfection are undertaken to assure the safety of water for the consumers;
- d) appropriate operational monitoring system including monitoring parameters that can be measured and for which limits have been set to define the operational effectiveness of the activity; frequency of monitoring and procedures for corrective action that can be implemented in response to deviation from limits. If, during production it is found that the water is polluted, the producer shall stop all operations until the cause of pollution is eliminated; and
- e) a verification plan to ensure that individual components of a potable water system and system as a whole is operating safely.

A.4 Surveillance

Potable water suppliers should ensure, at all times, the quality and safety of the water that they produce. Public health surveillance (that is, surveillance of health status and trends) contributes to verifying potable water safety.

DARS 2232:2026

Adequate infrastructure, proper monitoring and effective planning and management; and a system of independent surveillance are basic and essential requirements to ensure the safety of potable water. Surveillance should cover the total supply network from the source of natural water to the consumer delivery points.

A sampling programme that takes into consideration appropriate international recommendations should be established and implemented. The sampling should be regular and its frequency should mainly depend on the following factors:

- a) quality of water harnessed including effects on the water from climatic, human and industrial activities;
- b) type of treatment for potable worthiness;
- c) volume of water processed;
- d) risks of contamination;
- e) background of public water supply network;
- f) population served; and
- g) capabilities of the analytical facility (both in terms of capacity and in terms of analytical performance).

Bibliography

- [1] EAS 12, *Potable water – Specification*, Fourth edition 2023.
- [2] WHO, *Guidelines for drinking water quality*, Fourth edition 2017.
- [3] CAC/RCP 48, *Code of hygienic practice for bottled/packageged drinking waters (other than natural mineral waters)*, 2001.

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