

## **BOTTLED WATER**

Excerpted from the ADEM brochure Bottled Water, by Doug Cook  
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For many reasons an increasing number of American consumers have turned to bottled water as their primary source of drinking water. ADEM regulates the public water supply systems in Alabama; however, since bottled water is considered a 'food', it is regulated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. Bottled water is defined as, "water that is intended for human consumption and that is sealed in ... containers with no other ingredients except it may optionally contain safe and suitable anti-microbial agents."

The FDA regulations require that bottled water be supplied from an 'approved' source, which means the source "has been inspected, and the water sampled, analyzed, and found to be of a safe and sanitary quality according to the applicable laws and regulations of the State and local agencies having jurisdiction." ADEM is the agency that approves the bottled water source and a department representative will ensure the source meets all applicable regulations, which pertain to community water systems. The Alabama Dept. of Public Health, Inspection Section, is the agency that approves the plant and processes used to bottle and distribute water within the state.

The regulations that govern bottled water were revised in 1996. Included in these revisions, the FDA provided source definitions (i.e.-artesian water, well water, community water systems, etc.) and definitions regarding mineral water. Additionally, the FDA has adopted several USEPA Primary Drinking Water Standards'.

### **Is Bottled Water Safer Than Tap Water?**

If both the public water supply system and the bottled water producer are in full compliance with their respective regulations, then either source of water should be suitable for drinking. Bottled water is usually purchased as convenient, non-sweet beverage or to avoid a disagreeable taste or odor found in some water supplies. Both EPA and FDA regulations specify that if water quality standards of either a public water supply system or a bottled water product are not met, then the respective supplier must notify the public.