



Ohio Department of Health
Bureau of Environmental Health

**Procedures for Cleaning Cisterns and
Hauled Water Storage Tanks**

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Cisterns and hauled water storage tanks should be thoroughly cleaned periodically. How often this is done is going to be dependent on the area in which you live. Because cisterns collect rainwater off of the roof they are subject to varying amounts of potential contamination. In areas where there are large trees overhanging the roof area, or in areas where there is a lot of industrial activity, cistern cleaning should be performed more often. Cisterns in these types of areas should be cleaned every three to five years, but they may be cleaned more often if there is a desire or a need to do so. Hauled water storage tank systems that use exclusively hauled water will not require cleaning nearly as often as cisterns if care is taken when re-filling occurs. Ohio Administrative Code 3701-28-12 (N) describes the startup, operation and disinfection of cisterns and hauled water storage tanks.

***Entering an enclosed space such as a cistern or hauled water storage tank for cleaning can be a dangerous procedure without adequate ventilation. We recommend that a qualified registered private water systems contractor carry out these procedures.**

Steps:

1. Drain all of the old water from the tank.
2. Provide adequate ventilation by use of a fan or other mechanism.
3. Enter the inside of the tank. Make sure someone is around to provide assistance if required.
4. Physically remove all debris from the bottom and sides of tank.
5. With a stiff brush or power washer, scrub the walls and floor with an unscented chlorine water solution of sufficient strength to remove any bacterial slime and mineral encrustation.
6. Leave the inside of the tank and then rinse the walls with a strong chlorine water solution of 1000 parts per million. This can be obtained by mixing two gallon of 5.25% unscented chlorine bleach per each one hundred gallons of water. Leave a foot or more of water standing in the bottom of tank. You will need enough water to re-circulate the chlorine solution through the distribution system.
7. Circulate the chlorine solution throughout the distribution system and let stand for at least eight hours.
8. Evacuate the rinse water.
9. Clean or replace the floating intake filter. Roof washer filters should be inspected and cleaned twice per year.
10. Refill the tank with chlorinated water hauled in from a public water supply. Water hauled from a public water system must have a chlorine residual of 0.2 ppm at the time of delivery.
11. If continuous disinfection is by chemical means then re-calibrate the disinfection system and check the disinfectant residual. Check the chemical residual at the sampling port just after the retention (contact tank). Chlorine shall be at least 0.4 ppm, iodine 0.5 ppm, and ozone 0.1 ppm. Homeowners are required to have a chemical test kit for monitoring the type of system in use.