

Standards for Purchasing of POU Water Appliances

ADDRESSING CLEAN WATER NEEDS WITHIN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

As the largest employer in the United States, The United States Government maintains, owns, or leases over 30,000 buildings. These buildings are constantly kept up-to-date, providing the best available equipment and availability to the latest technologies that provide a safe environment for all visitors, employees, and contract staff.

Providing safe, clean, and potable water that is free from hazard and contamination is a right enjoyed by every American working in or visiting government-owned public facilities. However, when planning how needs are met within a government facility, it is important to know the facts:

1. The purchase of ongoing Bottled Water Services is restricted by the General Accounting Office (GAO). In their decision B202920, the GAO concludes that in cases whereby the building has public potable water, the purchase of bottled water service is to be considered a personal expense, thus appropriated funds may not be used for this purpose unless they can show that the available drinking water is found to be a health risk.
2. The GAO, in a separate ruling (B302993) has determined that appliances that benefit the entire building, such as POU water dispensers, are allowed to be purchased using appropriated funds.

As a result of the GAO rulings, Point-Of-Use filtered water dispensers are allowed to be purchased using appropriated funds, as long as those appliances are placed in common areas, to benefit the agency and not individual employees. This is significant as it provides clear direction to building specifiers, as well as contracting personnel, as to the methods they should use in order to provide enhanced water quality safety within government-owned buildings.

This ruling has been recognized by the General Services Administration (GSA), which incorporates the use of POU Filtered Water Dispensers into their PBS-P100 Facility Standards for the Public Building Service, which owns or manages over 8000 office and warehouse buildings.