

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING OVERVIEW FOR SMALL NON-COMMUNITY PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

All public water systems in Colorado are encouraged to develop Emergency Response Plans that will enable immediate and follow-up response by system personnel in the event of health-threatening occurrences of natural or human origin. An Emergency Response Plan can be very simple for small water systems or extremely complex for larger water systems. In either case, it should address the actions that water system operators will take to ensure protection of consumers' health and timely resumption of full water service. This information is intended to provide you with a general outline of areas that you should consider in developing your own Emergency Response Plan. Your plan should, at a minimum, address the following system-specific elements:

Consider and list all events or threats that could possibly affect your ability to produce water

- Chemical spills
- Flooding
- Distribution system failure
- Treatment process failure
- Failure of water source
- Vandalism/sabotage
- Earthquake
- Blizzard
- Power failure in a system

Perform an initial assessment of the impacts of the unexpected event or threat

- Estimate the possible effects on the system.
- Estimate water demand, both quantitative and qualitative.
- Determine where the system will be unable to meet demand.
- Establish priorities and determine the best way to use available water.
- Evaluate the need for additional disinfection procedures.
- Determine if water conservation measures are appropriate.
- Evaluate the need for alternative sources of water.

Develop a Communications Plan for employees, consumers, CDPHE, and the media

- Notify employees using predetermined recall list.
- If phone systems are inoperative, then all notifications must be accomplished in person in a circuit-rider fashion.
- Establish a system control center, and begin to notify consumers of the problem, its impacts on the system, and any remedial actions the consumers must take to minimized health related impacts.
- Notify external agencies or entities that may require situational information.

Develop a plan to correct the damage caused by the unexpected event

- Determine if the unexpected event is beyond the training and capabilities of system personnel to resolve. If so, contact agencies capable of resolving the problem.
- Determine work to be performed and set priorities on damage to be repaired.

- Consolidate equipment and supplies needed to resolve the problem.
- Provide appropriate safety equipment and instructions to repair personnel.
- Assign and dispatch personnel and equipment to critical areas in the system.
- If necessary, request aid from agencies with which the system has mutual aid agreements.

Initiate closure actions when remediation efforts have been completed

- Determine what specific laboratory tests are required to ensure that water being provided to consumers is safe.
- When appropriate, notify consumers that water is safe for consumption.
- Re-evaluate your Emergency Response Plan and make necessary changes based on lessons learned from this event.

The responses may be dependent on the type of event, though a few of the more commonly occurring events can be easily predetermined and standardized for ease of implementation. Notification processes, equipment lists, and supply lists can be predetermined and standardized to facilitate their use under any conditions. As stated previously, an Emergency Response Plan can be as simple or complex as the system to which it applies; however, it is extremely important to ensure that unexpected events affecting water system quality and quantity are quickly and safely resolved.

For more information, please visit this website:

<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/wq/drinkingwater/EmergencyResponse.html>.