

Emergency Planning for Small Systems



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Have you thought about what you would do if your one and only well for your public water supply suddenly stopped working? What if your hydropneumatic storage tank started leaking water? Do you have a plan for how you would handle an emergency at your public water supply?

Emergency planning has been a topic at our training workshops for many years now. When I bring this topic up at our workshops, I get many different responses. Some people will have a blank look on their face which tells me that they haven't thought about how they would handle an emergency. Some people will say "I will just call our well driller."



"It is important to update these lists on an annual basis."

I understand this response since most water operations specialists at small public water systems aren't well drillers! But what if the problem isn't with the well or well pump? For the water operations specialists that have been through an emergency at their public water system, they will usually share their emergency experience and talk about the importance of having a plan in place **before** an emergency occurs.

I recently talked with a water operations specialist for a small private school about putting together a plan if their one well stopped working. He had recently attended a training workshop where we talked about the importance of planning ahead for emergencies. I e-mailed him a copy of the contingency strategy that we discussed in class. He called his local well driller to come up with a plan of action if the well stopped working and was going to provide a copy of that plan to the pastor and church/school office. It didn't take him very long to put it together and he feels better knowing there is a plan in place! He told me that he knew who to call in an emergency but that if he wasn't available at least the church and school staff would know who to contact. Fantastic!!!

Regardless of the type and size of your water system, it is important to be prepared for any type of emergency situation that may occur at your water

system. Being prepared will save time, money, and frustration. Your emergency plan will become vital in the event of a disaster in which you lose your capability of supplying water to your system. Items to be included in the emergency plan include: a summary of your drinking water system; a list of contacts with phone numbers; and a description of alternative water supply options.

It is important to have the water system information and contacts with phone numbers documented for everyone to use. You may know the information but if you aren't at the facility, will others know whom to contact in an emergency?

Once the lists are completed, it is best to post a copy in a central location and provide copies in all well houses. **It is important to update these lists on an annual basis.** I have included a copy of a contingency strategy that we put together for small systems on pages 27 and 28. As many of you remember from our training workshops, when you start working with a Minnesota Department of Health or Minnesota Rural Water Association Source Water Protection Planner you will be completing the attached contingency strategy for your Wellhead Protection Action Plan. If you would like copies of this contingency strategy for your use, please contact the MRWA office at 800-367-6792.

(For more information on Action Plans for Non-Municipal Systems, see Dave Neiman's article on page 24).

water treatment storage distribution

wastewater collection treatment

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Contingency Strategy

Public Water Supply Characteristics

A. Wells – *(List your well(s) information)*

B. Treatment – *(A brief discussion of treatment process)*

C. Storage and Distribution – *(Describe your system storage capacity, tanks, and distribution lines)*

	Well Number	Well Number	Well Number	Well Number
Unique Well Number				
Well Depth (ft)				
Well Diameter				
Pump				
Storage Type and Capacity				
Treatment				
Location of Available Maps				
Distribution System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mains - Service Lines - Other 				
Valves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type - Location 				

Alternate Water Supply

(Select the most feasible option and populate text appropriately with contact name and 24-hour contact phone number).

- A. Bottled Water Supplies, Delivery, and Distribution -

- B. System Interconnects and Other Water Supply Alternatives. -

- C. Other Alternative Drinking Water Resources -

Inventory of Available Emergency Equipment and Materials

Contact	Home Phone	Work Phone	Address	Response Assignment	Alternate
Water System Personnel					
Power Company					
Well Driller					
Plumber					
Electrician					
MDH Contact					
MRWA Technical Services					

Minnesota Duty Officer
Metro: 651-649-5451
Greater Minnesota: 1-800-422-0798

Public Information Plan

(Describe how residents and/or employees will be notified in the event of an emergency)