

Top Ten List Preparing Your Public Water System for **Pandemic and Natural Disasters**

During a natural disaster or pandemic emergency, it should be assumed that public water systems could have severe shortages in staffing, as much as 30-40%, and disruptions in the supply-chain. There is also potential for disruption of communications, transportation, services, utilities and public safety.

Prepare now! The most important step is to update your emergency response plan.

Here are a few tips for your public water system to use in its preparation:

- 10.** Review and update your emergency response plan, including the identification of critical functions and supplies, and to include issues of operating with severe staff shortages (40-60%).
- 9.** Prepare yourself, your family and your home first (see FEMA's "Are You Ready?" guide at <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/index.shtm>). Have attendance policies in place that allow workers to take care of families but still provide you with adequate staffing.
- 8.** Examine workforce alternatives: mutual aid agreements with area communities, contingency contracts with contract operators, and cross training within town departments and utilities. Learn more about the Connecticut Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network (CtWARN) and how your utility can join this free and voluntary mutual aid and agreement network at <http://www.ctwarn.org>.
- 7.** Create and maintain both an onsite and offsite emergency kit with a list of critical contacts, updated utility diagrams/maps of the system, operations and maintenance manuals, standard operating procedures, and any critical customer information. Also include extra sets of facility keys at multiple secure locations.
- 6.** Conduct a "walk through" tour of your facility with your local emergency responders to familiarize them. Make sure all valves and equipment are clearly and accurately labeled.
- 5.** Prepare a communications strategy. Include communicating system status with the state and customers. Develop standard language for various public notices, including Do Not Drink, Boil Water Notices etc.
- 4.** Stock supplies and chemicals safely and securely. If space is an issue, have backup vendor contact information up-to-date and available. Ensure that all applicable regulations are complied with when storing large amounts of chemicals onsite.
- 3.** Exercise emergency generators no less than monthly. Also have contacts in place for receiving fuel during an emergency.
- 2.** Consider preparation for employees remaining at work for extended periods. This could include adequate sleeping arrangements, food, water, medical supplies, communication links etc.
- 1.** Practice, practice, practice your emergency response plan!and wash your hands!