

Emergency Response Planning

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Emergency response planning is one of those pieces of the puzzle that is usually the last to be found, (or implemented), and suddenly the picture becomes complete. Unfortunately, the picture is seen after the fact that a catastrophe has happened and everyone involved is allowed to give an opinion of “You should have done this or that.” Isn’t hindsight a wonderful advantage?

Try to look at the picture through the eyes of an artist, someone who can see something before the completion. Many resources are available that can assist in the development of an emergency response plan. Since we have commemorated the third anniversary of September 11th, the detail of work for emergency response planning has had to take on a new approach.

The important factor in writing the emergency response plan is not the completion of such, but the continuation of the plan. Emergency response plans regarding water systems entail two basic functions, the first being that if such a catastrophe should occur, the public water system can respond and return to normal operational mode in the shortest amount of time, and second, if the public water system is incapacitated for a lengthy time, then where is the alternative source of water going to come from.

According to the Oregon Administrative Rules 333-61-0064, the requirements for emergency response plans and water system operational manual’s is outlined per system population served. For water systems serving a population of 3,300 or less has to have their plan completed and put into action by June 30, 2005.

The emergency response plan, when completed shall be synchronized with the lead county emergency coordinator and revised when changes are made to the plan itself. Some elements of the plan shall include but not limited to the following:

- a. Communications and Authority:
 - Emergency contact list, review and update annually:
 - Decision making authorities and responsibilities of water system

personnel shall be determined and detailed.

- Procedure for notification of agencies, water users and local media.
- b. Water System Security:
 - The security portion shall include components of security management, physical activity, physical security, chemical storage and use, personnel, computer system and program evaluation.
 - Security assessment and corrections in deficiencies shall be conducted.
- c. System Hazard Review:
 - The public water system shall conduct an inspection of the system annually to identify hazards that could affect the system.
 - The public water system shall correct construction deficiencies to eliminate potential hazards, correct major sanitary survey deficiencies and perform regular maintenance.
- d. Emergency Equipment and water supplies:
 - Making provisions for auxiliary power supply if the water system is not a gravity system and redundant equipment for critical components, identifying such equipment that can be utilized in the event of an intentional attack; which can render harmless or significantly reduce the impact of the attack on the public health and safety of the public drinking water.
 - Development of a plan for emergency water to include rationing of drinking water, identifying and utilizing alternative drinking water sources and supplies and alternative distribution of drinking water.
- e. Emergency response procedures:
 - The public water system shall develop procedures for responding to emergencies most likely to strike a water system. Community water systems shall develop a plan and procedures that can be implemented in the event of an intentional attack on the water system.

- The emergency response plan shall describe procedures to isolate all parts of the water system. Community water systems shall develop actions and procedures which can render harmless or significantly lessen the impact of such attacks on public health and safety and supply of the drinking water.
 - The plan shall describe the emergency disinfection procedure, process for issuing boiling water advisory, and process for handling a waterborne disease outbreak.
- f. The water system staff shall be instructed and trained in the use of the emergency response plan.

The remaining section outlined under 333-61-0064 describes the layout of operational manuals as well as the staff being instructed in the use of the water system operational manuals. Please read the Oregon Administrative Rules 333-61-0064 for a complete description of emergency response protocol.

The state of Oregon has followed the federal guidelines in implementing a State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), which outlines procedures to Local Emergency Planning Committees, (LEPC) in handling emergencies on a local scale (city). LEPC's prepare and maintain comprehensive emergency plans that address extremely hazardous substances as well as 1000's of hazardous chemicals for which OSHA requires a material safety data sheet.

If chlorine is a substance used at your facility (or other hazardous substance) and a developed plan for accidental release in the community is written, you can use the same general planning principals.

The plans written by water systems should include current contact information for fire, emergency medical services and law enforcement. A roster of emergency response telephone numbers shall include county health agencies in addition to county emergency management directors, local media and utility companies that may be affected if a catastrophe should occur. By contacting the LEPC, the water system has a valuable source of

information, let alone connecting to a network that is already established.

Specific points should be noted in your plan to hazardous materials response personnel indicating that if a spill should occur within the public water system's drinking water protection area, the response and clean up efforts are completed with water concerns receiving top priority.

Water system personnel should have an open line of communication with emergency response personnel regarding catastrophes within the drinking water protection area, insuring information is updated, meetings held regularly and outline of the roles of each, respectfully.

One method to accomplish the criteria for an Emergency response plan is to develop a drinking water protection plan (DWPP), which includes a section regarding the Oregon Administrative Rules 333-61-0064. Many of the aspects of the emergency response plan are outlined in the drinking water protection plan for the simple fact of the concern with maintaining and delivering good clean water.

Oregon Association of Water Utilities has reviewed and outlined specific points of the drinking water protection plan; adding, deleting and adjusting those points to make a more complete plan detailed for a particular water system in the most thorough way possible. The state agencies have in depth information to assist in the development of plans, while offering workshops on just such topics.

If the picture of emergency response planning is as clear as mud, call Oregon Association of Water Utilities' office and we'll be happy to bring out the water colors and finger paints. The best of everything that life has to offer! Mr. OpTIMist.