Items to Update

Consider the following when updating your system's plan.

- Do employees know and understand their responsibilities with respect to the emergency response plan?
- Have problem areas in the plan been addressed?
- Does the plan reflect changes in personnel or the layout of the facility?
- Has your system changed its processes or procedures?
- Are photographs, maps and records in your facility up-to-date?
- Are the names, areas of expertise and phone numbers in your plan current?
- Does your system's plan have a training component and are staff members meeting training objectives based on it?
- Have first responders, community organizations, and your regulatory agency been briefed on the system's plan? Have they had a chance to evaluate it?

Resources

U.S. EPA Emergency Response Tabletop Exercises for Drinking Water and Wastewater Systems (CD)

www.epa.gov/safewater/watersecurity/tools/trainingcd/

AWWA: Emergency Response and Recovery Planning for Water Systems: A Kit of Tools (Book)

www.awwa.org/Bookstore/index.cfm?&navItemNumber=1414

Emergency Management Institute: FEMA Independent Study Program (Free Online Courses)

www.training.fema.gov/IS/

For more information, please contact Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters at (614) 644-2752 or visit our Security Web site:

www.epa.state.oh.us/ddagw/

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Practicing Your Emergency Plan

A Guide for Public Water Systems

Improve Response by Practicing and Updating Your Emergency Preparedness Plan

Division of Drinking and Ground Waters

Fall 2007

Why practice?

In addition to writing an emergency preparedness plan, it is essential for public water systems to practice and update it in order to:

- familiarize staff with procedures and the structure of the plan;
- train staff on how to use the plan and help them further develop problem solving skills;
- evaluate it to ensure its effectiveness; and
- identify additional training needed to help staff be effective when using the plan.

Training Exercises

There are four types of exercises in which the emergency preparedness plan is practiced. The type of training exercises used can be tailored to the needs of the system.

- Orientation sessions are used to introduce new or updated information to staff expected to be familiar with the plan.
- Tabletop exercises are used to practice responses to an emergency scenario prepared ahead of time. The exercise can include a single or several steps to respond to the emergency. Responses are verbal.
- Functional exercises are used to practice and simulate actions in the plan for a prepared emergency scenario. Functional exercises are more involved and for a large group of participants, require significant planning time.
- Full-scale drills are used to practice mobilizing participants and equipment for responding to a prepared emergency scenario. Drills can be an all-day event and generally take place every five years.

The Fundamentals

Fundamental emergency response training for your system's staff may include:

- learning about hazards and protective actions in the workplace;
- communication procedures;
- location and use of common equipment; and
- evacuation and accountability procedures.

Updating the Plan

Emergency response plans should be reviewed by all staff and updated every year to ensure that content is current. You may also want to modify the plan after training, an emergency event, when personnel changes or if the layout of the facility changes.

It's important to update your plan **at least** annually regardless of the size of your public water system. If an emergency situation were to occur, you will be under stress and may not have the time or resources to find new phone numbers or different chemical and equipment suppliers.

Practicing and updating an emergency preparedness plan is important for all systems, not just large ones. Remember to *anticipate, prepare and practice!*

ANTICIPATE who you may need to contact during emergencies, such as the fire department, police, and so forth.

PREPARE your system by contacting these professionals to discuss your emergency response plan.

PRACTICE your emergency response plan with these professionals and take advantage of their expertise on the subject. Update your system's plan as you discover weaknesses.