

How Public Water Systems Can Prepare for Fall Hurricane Season in Maine

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program • 11 SHS Augusta, ME 04330 • 287-2070 • www.medwp.com



In Maine, hurricanes don't happen often but they can be devastating when they do. The Atlantic hurricane season typically runs from late summer into fall, with the majority of hurricanes happening in the months of August, September, and October. Hurricanes bring extreme weather including thunderstorms with lightning, hail, tornadoes, strong winds and flash flooding. With this weather comes power outages and flooding, which can cause big problems for public water systems. The time to plan, and prepare for, extreme weather events is before they happen.

Preparing Your Water System

The following is an extreme weather event preparation checklist for your public water system:

- Emergency preparedness plan is updated and current, including all contacts listed in the plan.
- Generator has been tested with load.
- There is enough fuel on hand for the generator.
- If there is no generator, there are alternative plans for power.
- Critical customers are identified and there is a current contact list (Hospitals, shelters, schools, elder care facilities, clinics, critical businesses)
- Forms for a boil water notice are on hand.
- Storage tanks are full.
- If storage capacity or the capacity to pump is lost, there are plans in place for an alternative water source (*emergency connection, alternative source, bulk haul options arranged or bottled water contacts handy in an extreme emergency*)
- Back up staff have been identified if most staff are being utilized to repair lines or property (*including office staff for your consumers needs*)
- If power is lost, there is a reliable way available to access current news and weather reports.
- Forms of communication are still clear with no access to power. (Cell phone, radio, broadband)
- Mutual aid contacts are handy for back up resources.



Preparing Your Consumers

In the event your water system loses the capacity to deliver water, or the water quality is impaired because of storm related events, your consumers are going to need clear communication throughout the entire event. **The following is a preparation checklist in consideration of your consumers:**

- Prepare your consumers to be self-sufficient for 72 hours. It's reasonable to expect 1-3 days of no service in severe weather and your consumers should know ahead of time to prepare for that.
- Have materials (and a plan) on hand to explain any drinking water orders that may be issued (Boil Water Order, Do Not Drink, Do Not Use).
- Establish lines of communication with your consumers that can be used without power.
- Be able to direct consumers to alternative water sources.
- Have a designated spokesperson, if need be.
- Anticipate common questions from consumers you might get in an emergency (see reverse side).



Keep Your Drinking Water Safe:

✓ Protect Your Source

✓ Take Your Samples

✓ Maintain Your Treatment

✓ Inspect Your Pipes & Tanks

Common Questions from Consumers

An important step in preparing for an emergency is anticipating and preparing for common questions your water system may get from consumers. ***The following are questions commonly asked by water system consumers during emergencies:***



Questions to anticipate when there is no water available:

- ✓ What are the plans for restoring water service?
- ✓ Where can I get water now?
- ✓ When will you be able to provide back up water? (*i.e. bottled water*)
- ✓ Who else doesn't have water?
- ✓ What other resources do you have? (*Who can we call, where do we go if we can't stay at home?*)

Questions to anticipate when the water quality is impaired:

- ✓ How long will it be until the water is safe again?
- ✓ What can we do to make the tap water safe in our home?
- ✓ What exactly is the contaminant and how dangerous is it?
- ✓ Who is affected? What if we drank some already?
- ✓ What are the symptoms of exposure?
- ✓ What uses of the tap water are safe?

Additional Resources in Emergency Preparedness for Extreme Weather Events

National Weather Service: National Hurricane Center– Hurricane Preparedness- Be Ready
<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php>

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)– Hurricanes
<http://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>

Maine Emergency Management Agency– Maine Prepares
www.maineprepares.com

MEWARN: Maine's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network
www.mewarn.org or 207-737-4092

Maine Rural Water Association
www.mainerwa.org 207-737-4092

Maine Drinking Water Program-For more fact sheets and information please call the Maine Drinking Water Program at **207-287-2070** and ask for an emergency preparedness specialist or visit www.medwp.com

