Alaska's Drinking Water Program

Drinking Water

What would DEC do if there was a major threat or incident at a Public Drinking Water System?

Public Water System (PWS) owners/operators and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Drinking Water (DW) Program should be prepared before an incident occurs that poses a threat to the quality of drinking water. To be prepared, the PWS owners should complete, or review and update, their operational plans and emergency response plans (ERP). This is the PWS owner's responsibility. Being prepared gives everyone the best possible chance of avoiding significant problems if an incident occurs.

IN PREPARATION!

PWS owners should establish or review their current ERP, with special attention focused on their ability to provide a safe backup (alternate) drinking water supply.

- In Alaska, PWS owners of new Class A systems are required by regulation, 18 AAC 80.207, to provide an available and viable alternative supply of drinking water if their primary source is contaminated or if they are unable to provide drinking water to their customers. Additional regulations for an ERP will be proposed in the near future. These requirements are challenging, but are very significant and important issues that the PWS owner must address. The ERP will be reviewed during the PWS's routine sanitary survey.

ADEC DW Program staff are available to review a system's ERP and offer technical assistance in updating the PWS's ERP. As a primacy state, the State of Alaska is required to ensure that PWS have an ERP and a clearly identified and readily available alternative drinking water source.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS AN INCIDENT?

If contacted about an incident, the appropriate DW Program staff **will**:

- contact the PWS owner/operator and confirm they've had an incident or suspect an incident;
- check to see that the owner/operator has contacted the local law enforcement;
- check with the owner/operator to see what actions have been taken by the PWS owner;
- send one of the DW Program staff on-site to inspect the facility with the PWS operator or owner and to evaluate the incident or potential incident;
- confirm with the PWS owner/operator they have an adequate supply of water collection bottles;
- if a local lab is unavailable to analyze the sample(s), DW Program staff will coordinate laboratory services with another available lab;
- if a contamination event or a probable contamination event is confirmed from our site visit, we would require the water system owner to provide public notice to the residents via local radio and/or newspaper, phone calls, or point of use (washeteria, post office, and/or city hall);
- help the PWS owner develop the public notice or media language;
- assist the water system owner and other agencies to provide a temporary emergency supply of drinking water for local residents, if necessary; and
- after determining the type of contamination in the system, and if necessary, DW Program staff will recommend longer-term treatment modifications to the current treatment works, or recommend a portable treatment system to be installed.

ADEC DW Program **will not:**

- take over the operation of the PWS;
- collect water samples for testing;
- make modifications to the system; or
- obtain or provide an alternative supply of drinking water to the PWS or the customers.

These are responsibilities of the PWS, and will not be taken on or assumed by the ADEC DW Program.