



Inclement Weather Preparedness for Oregon's Public Water Systems

Winter storms, severe rain, icy conditions, and other inclement weather can lead to emergencies that affect drinking water facilities and public health. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Drinking Water Service (DWS) developed this guidance to help Public Water System (PWS) operators and staff prepare for potential inclement weather during the fall and winter months.

Actions to prepare for inclement weather

- Fill reservoirs before inclement weather is predicted to affect your service area.
- Develop roles and responsibilities for staff before, during and after a power outage, including appropriate communication protocols. Ensure water system staff are properly prepared at home such as having emergency drinking water and food, tire chains, alternative transportation routes, redundant communication methods, etc.).
- Discuss with [local or county emergency managers](#) on how the water system may be impacted during winter storms, flooding, or icy conditions and what resources the system may need to continue serving safe drinking water to your customers. Discuss how local emergency responders can support your utility, potential bulk water hauling (and points of distribution), ensuring safe transportation routes to critical infrastructure, water advisories, and customer notifications.
- Work with local agencies and partners to ensure the utility is properly prioritized when determining plowing and road salting/sanding operations.
- Be sure contracts with water treatment chemical suppliers include wording that you are a priority customer. Consider renting generators or purchasing extra fuel, chemicals, and supplies for critical water system infrastructure in advance of inclement weather.
- Become an [Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network \(ORWARN\)](#) member to request and receive assistance from partnering water utilities. There is no requirement for a water system to respond to assistance requests.
- Contact your local electric utility to discuss power supply to key water system infrastructure and obtain 24/7 emergency contact information for your electric utility. Determine where your treatment plant and key pumping stations rank on the prioritization list for power restoration. Try to get as high on the list as possible by making sure the electric utility understands the reliance of the



community (hospitals, shelters, and sensitive populations, etc.) on drinking water systems.

- Have a plan for stationary and portable generators and exercise them before inclement weather could impact the water system. Ensure that generators are pre-staged at locations when inclement weather can be expected to potentially affect one or more of your water system's components.
- Identify institutional customers serving vulnerable populations such as healthcare facilities, warming shelters, elder or child-care facilities, obtain their emergency contact information to communicate any potential service disruptions, and develop a plan to prioritize their service restoration.
- Develop relationships with large water users and develop trust to discuss industrial water curtailment while there are more immediate public health needs for drinking water. Consider contacting the large water users to determine if their operations will continue or shut down during inclement weather events.
- Contact your drinking water laboratory and discuss their operations during inclement weather, have a backup plan in the event the normal lab has closed and [find another accredited lab](#) as a backup.

Other considerations

- Discuss changes to water system operations with your regulatory drinking water agency.
- Ensure your emergency response procedures for mainline breaks, coliform sampling plan, drinking water advisory templates, and emergency contact list are all up to date and that all water system staff are trained.
- Ensure you have an effective method for communicating drinking water advisories with your customers and anticipate any common questions from the public.
- Communicate to your customers about the need to have emergency food and water for themselves and their families.



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Center for Health Protection, Drinking Water Services



For more information, visit www.healthoregon.org/dws.
You can also call Drinking Water Services at 971-673-0405 or email
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