PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Drinking Water Services

Oregon Health Authority

Wildfire Preparedness Guidance for Oregon's Public Drinking Water Providers

by Chantal Wikstrom

As Oregon's climate and weather patterns continue to change, bringing increasing temperatures, snowpack decline, earlier runoff, and other effects, the likelihood of wildfires increases. Wildfires can lead to public health emergencies, including emergencies that affect drinking water facilities. Oregon Drinking Water Services has developed the following guidance to help water systems prepare for wildfire season.

Actions to prepare for wildfire season
- Ensure your Emergency Response Plan is up to date and contains procedures or actions for how to respond to wildfires, including information on interties and emergency water sources, communications procedures, evacuation procedures for staff, and emergency contact information. Identify vulnerable water users such as hospitals and medical-care, childcare, and eldercare facilities.
    - Emergency Response Plan Templates for Oregon's Public Water Systems
    - EPA Emergency Response Plan Template
    - EPA Wildfire Incident Action Checklist

- Establish contacts with your local and county emergency management agency. Coordinating with emergency managers can mean quicker response activities such as power restoration, clearing debris from access roads, and emergency water hauling.
    - Oregon Local and Tribal Emergency Managers Contact List
    - Oregon Public Health Authority Directory by County

- Be ready to offer or receive mutual aid assistance to or from nearby water system operators by joining ORWARN. Available emergency equipment (pumps, generators, chlorinators, etc.) and personnel (trained operators) are available to other member utilities during an emergency. Membership is free.

- Create and maintain a defensible space around facilities and key components that is clear of vegetation (trees, shrubs, grass, etc.). This buffer zone will help slow or stop the spread of wildfires and can help protect the facility and components from catching fire. For more information see CalFire Defensible Space.

- Actively monitor fire and weather conditions, including fire perimeter proximity to your system.
  - Northwest Interagency Coordination Center (NWCC) Large Fire Map
  - InciWeb Map
  - Oregon Public Water System Map

- Communicate with customers and provide guidance on water advisories, water conservation, fire prevention, and mitigation. Ensure there are effective methods of communicating information to customers during an emergency, such as social media, reverse 911, radio, and your water system website.
  - Public Notice Resources & Templates

- Inventory and order extra supplies (generators, fuel, PPE, chemicals, etc.) because there may be supply-chain disruptions or road closures.

Additional resources
- Post-wildfire guidance for water systems
  - Post Wildfire Monitoring Guidance for PWS
  - Post Wildfire VOC Sampling for PWS
- Drought and water conservation
  - Current U.S. Drought Monitor Conditions for Oregon
  - EPA Drought Incident Action Checklist
  - EPA Drought Response & Recovery for Water Utilities

The following pages contain forms you may use to plan for wildfire emergency response.

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EMERGENCY CONTACTS

(Review/update annually)

Organization	Contact Name	Business Hours	After Hours
OHA Drinking Water Services		**(971) 673-0405**	**(971) 704-1174**
County Health Department			
Fire Department			
Law Enforcement			
Emergency Management Agency			
Equipment or Chemical Supply			
Engineering Company			
Electrical Utilities			
Alternate Water Suppliers			
Pump Maintenance Company			
Media			
Medical Facilities			
Nursing/Rehab Facilities			
Day Care Centers			
Schools			

TO REPORT A DRINKING WATER SYSTEM EMERGENCY

Be prepared to provide the following information when contacting
Drinking Water Services, OERS, and/or your county health department

1. Your name, address, phone number, and current location
2. Type of incident
3. Exact location of incident
4. The date and time the incident occurred
5. Nature of threat to the water system

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR EVENTS

Use the following table to describe emergencies common to your water system, procedures to be taken by staff to complete the procedure, whom to notify, and follow-up actions. Make a note in the *Procedure* column to reference emergency procedures currently in your operations manual. Emergencies can include power outage, main break, loss of pressure, chlorine treatment failure, microbial or chemical contamination, oil spills affecting source water, flooding, and other natural and man-made emergencies.

Emergency Type	Procedure	Designated Staff
[Example: winter storms]		
[Example: contaminants detected in distribution system]		
[Example: flooding events]		
[Example: power outage]		

In any event, take these general steps:

1. Confirm and analyze the type and severity of the emergency.
2. Take immediate action to reduce injuries, save lives, and prevent system damage.
3. Make repairs based on priority demand.
4. Return your system to normal operations.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

If your system does not have procedures in place for notifying customers, your primacy agency and other important contacts, use the following chart to identify steps to be taken and by whom. Water systems should consider identifying vulnerable populations they serve and notifying them during a boil water advisory or emergency. Customers serving vulnerable populations include, for example, hospitals, childcare facilities, schools, nursing homes, and rehabilitation facilities.

Notify water system customers

Who is responsible:	
Procedures:	

Notify local/state drinking water services, emergency managers, local public health officials

Who is responsible:	
Procedures:	

Emergency intertie, alternate water sources

Who is responsible:	
Procedures:	

Issuing a boil water advisory or public health issue

Who is responsible:	
Procedures:	