*JPIA*Source

Emergency Response Plans
for Public Water Agencies

Many ACWA JPIA members are familiar with [America's Water Infrastructure Act Risk and Resilience Assessment and Emergency Response Planning](#) of 2018, (AWIA) Section 2013(b), which requires community water and wastewater systems serving populations greater than 3,300 to develop or update an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) that incorporates findings of their risk assessment. An ERP describes the utility's strategies, resources, plans, and procedures to prepare for and respond to an incident, natural or man-made, that threatens life, property, or the environment.

Incidents can range from small main breaks or localized flooding to large-scale damage caused by wildland fires, earthquakes, or system contamination, among other examples.

AWIA requires that ERPs address the following criteria:

- ✓ Strategies and resources to improve the resilience of the system, including the physical security and cybersecurity of the system.

- ✓ Plans and procedures that can be implemented, and identification of equipment that can be utilized, in the event of a malevolent act or natural hazard that threatens the ability of the community water system to deliver safe drinking water.

- ✓ Actions, procedures, and equipment that can obviate or significantly lessen the impact of a

malevolent act or natural hazard on the public health and the safety and supply of drinking water provided to communities and individuals, including the development of alternative source water options, relocation of water intakes, and construction of flood protection barriers.

- ✓ Strategies that can be used to aid in the detection of malevolent acts or natural hazards that threaten the security or resilience of the system.

Many of our potable water members have gone through these steps to develop their ERP:

- ✓ **Conducted a Risk and Resilience Assessment (RA)** - Earthquakes are at the top of the list, but wildfires, flooding from storms, and even hurricanes could be significant risks that need to be addressed. See EPA's online [Vulnerability Self-Assessment Tool](#) for more information on conducting a RA.

- ✓ **Identified State Regulatory Requirements** California has specific requirements to consider when preparing your ERP [DDW Emergency Requirements](#).

- ✓ **Identified and Integrated Local Plans** - ERPs should dovetail with other emergency plans in your community as much as possible. These may include county emergency operations

plans, hazardous materials (Hazmat) response plans, or local hazard mitigation plans.

✓ **Coordinate with Local Emergency Planning Committees and Response Partners** - Statewide emergency preparedness, disaster response, and mutual assistance processes for public and private water and wastewater utilities are supported and promoted through CalWarn. Within specific jurisdictions, local organizations have been established to provide similar support:

☼ Water Emergency Response Organization of Orange County WEROC.

☼ Public Water Agencies Group PWAG (for agencies located in Los Angeles County).

☼ Emergency Response Network of the Inland Empire ERNIE.

☼ The AWWA developed Utilities Helping Utilities to guide the development of local Mutual Aid Networks.

✓ **Planned for Resources** - The resources (i.e., personnel, equipment, supplies, and facilities) your utility owns or has access to will influence how you develop your ERP procedures.

✓ **Agencies With Populations Under 3,300 Should Also Develop Their Emergency Response Plan** - The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RECAP) developed the following template rcap-emergency-response-planning-template-public-drinking-water-systems.

Even though our members who provide water for agricultural purposes are not required to have an Emergency Plan, we encourage all members to go through the steps to develop one as a means to implement and comply with California's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Having an active and current plan provides a roadmap to preparedness, response, and recovery.

The JPIA's Risk Advisors understand the development of a SEMS/NIMS written plan can be time-consuming and complex. For these reasons, we encourage our members to start with the RECAP template, and/or the EPA has various Incident Action Checklists specifically for water utilities that simplify the creation or enhance your ERP for emergencies such as floods, wildfires, earthquakes, and many more.

The state requires training and ERPs are aligned with the California Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the Federal Government National Incident Management System (NIMS). The JPIA recommends that members take the State of California Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) training and the Federal Government National Incident Management System training. All three courses are available online:

- ✓ CTSI - SEMS G606 Online Training -2.0 hours

- ✓ NIMS ICS-100.C Intro to ICS-Interactive Web-Based Course -2 hours

- ✓ NIMS IS-700.B Intro to NIMS Interactive Web-Based Course -3.5 hours

This will ensure your agency can participate in local and regional emergency operations centers and be eligible for disaster reimbursement funds in case of an emergency.

FEMA funds are also available now for mitigation that will flow through Cal OES. You will want to attend a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Webinar. Also, review what the EPA has posted regarding FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants for Water/Wastewater Utilities.

JPIASource

The JPIASource is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

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