

What Makes a Water-Prepared Local Health Department?



Local health departments can use this checklist to make sure they are ready for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) emergencies.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- Identify the authority and responsibility of your health department in responding to water emergencies in your jurisdiction:
 - » State versus local authority;
 - » Local agencies and stakeholders: health department, environmental agencies, emergency management, water utilities, and others;
 - » Public versus private water systems;
 - » Response activities, community outreach, communication.
- Understand the responsibility of different teams within your health department in preparing for, and responding to, water emergencies (e.g. preparedness, environmental health, epidemiology).

PARTNERSHIPS

- Identify key partners involved in water emergency response within your jurisdiction and state (e.g. water utilities, environmental agencies, emergency management, laboratory).
- Engage with key partners within your jurisdiction for planning and training (e.g. conduct tabletop exercises) to ensure all stakeholders know their roles. Refer to the resources in this checklist for more information.
- Coordinate with key partners during planning and response to water emergencies.

PLANNING

- Review and update the emergency operations plan to include water emergencies (e.g. biological and chemical contaminants, natural disasters).
- Identify steps for surveillance and response to biological and chemical water contamination.
- Understand the different terminology and acronyms used in water preparedness (e.g. boil water advisory versus boil water alert).
- Prepare maps or GIS, if available, for the jurisdiction distinguishing where municipal supply lines, public wells, and private wells are located.

[CHECKLIST]

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MITIGATION, STRENGTHENING, AND RESILIENCE

- Assess infrastructure of jurisdiction (e.g. pipes).
- Conduct a risk assessment of water vulnerability.

COMMUNICATION

- Develop a risk communication plan for responding to water emergencies with key partners. Refer to CDC's Drinking Water Advisory Communications Toolbox in "Resources."
- Develop message maps to help rapidly dispense information for a water emergency (include fillable boil water notices, etc.) that have been pre-vetted by your agency administration.
- Understand the requirements of the water utilities to notify the public of water alerts, advisories, and so on. Specific language may need to be used by the water department, and the health department may be able to assist in relaying the message in less-technical terms.

Resources

- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Preparedness Resource Library
bit.ly/WASHResourceLibrary
- CDC WASH Homepage
www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/index.htm
- Drinking Water Advisory Tabletop Exercise Manual
bit.ly/DrinkingWaterAdvisoryTTX
- Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox
bit.ly/38Tnsby
- Emergency Water Supply Planning Guide for Hospitals and Healthcare Facilities
bit.ly/WaterPlanningGuide

To learn more about NACCHO's role in WASH Preparedness and to hear success stories from local health departments, visit www.naccho.org/wash. Or, send questions and comments to WASH@naccho.org.

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to improve the health of communities by strengthening and advocating for local health departments.

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