

Small Water Systems: Responding to Loss of Pressure Events

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program • 11 SHS Augusta, ME 04330 • 287-2070 • www.medwp.com

This document is aimed at helping small public water systems, such as restaurants, schools, and mobile home parks respond appropriately to a loss of pressure event in their water system, while protecting the safety of their consumers.

Positive Pressure Keeps Contamination Out of Your Water System



If your water system loses pressure, contamination may have entered your water system, putting your customers at risk. You must take prompt action, which may include disinfection, flushing, customer notification, and possibly a Boil Water Order.

Pressure loss can be defined as very low or no pressure within the water system, often resulting in no water in parts or all of the system.

Pressure Loss Can Occur Due To:

- Well Pump Failure or Malfunction
- Power Outages Long Enough in Duration to Deplete Storage
- Significant Repairs to the Water System
- Broken Water Lines

What Do I Do If My Water System Loses Pressure?

Each situation is unique – because circumstances vary between pressure loss events, the order of actions below may fluctuate.

1. Notify your customers - If you cannot adequately flush and disinfect your water system after water pressure is restored, you must institute a Boil Water Order and notify your consumers as soon as possible¹. You should also notify your customers if they will be receiving highly chlorinated water.

2. Disinfection – Add an appropriate amount of chlorine bleach to your well and/or storage tank². Ensure that a chlorine residual is present at each tap within the distribution system. This addition of chlorine may be done before or after pressure is restored.

3. Flushing – After water service is restored, flushing should occur to remove contamination such as sediment and other material or to remove highly chlorinated water. Depending upon the event, flushing could occur before and after the disinfection step.

4. Test your water – After disinfecting and flushing your water system, collect an Operations & Maintenance (O&M) total coliform bacteria sample. If the sample is positive for total coliform, repeat the disinfection and flushing procedure. If sample is positive for *E.Coli*, immediately issue a Boil Water Order and notify the Drinking Water Program at 287-2070.



As the owner or operator of a public water system, you are responsible for the quantity & quality of the water served. If you are unsure about the safety of the water, a Boil Water Order can reduce the risk of exposure to your customers. In addition, if you are unsure of the steps you should take after a pressure loss event at your water system, contact the Drinking Water Program.

When Do I Issue a Boil Water Order?

- If you cannot adequately flush and disinfect your water system
- If any water samples are positive for *E. coli*.
- If there is a broken sewer line adjacent to a broken water line

When one of these criteria are met, you must institute a Boil Water Order, notify your consumers as soon as possible, and contact the Drinking Water Program at 287-2070.

1. Notification shall be made using the DWP approved Boil Water Order Notice which can be found on the DWP website at www.medwp.com or by calling 287-2070 or after hours at 557-4214. The notice must be distributed to the consumer either by hand, posting in a common area, or as an announcement on radio or TV.

2. Guidance on the proper procedure for shock chlorinating and flushing water systems can be found on the DWP website at www.medwp.com or by calling the DWP at 287-2070. Some treatment systems may be adversely impacted by high levels of chlorine. Consult with your treatment vendor before disinfecting.



✓ Protect Your Source

✓ Take Your Samples

✓ Maintain Your Treatment

✓ Inspect Your Pipes & Tanks

Keep Your Drinking Water Safe: