

STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP

Quarterly Newsletter For Maine Water Systems



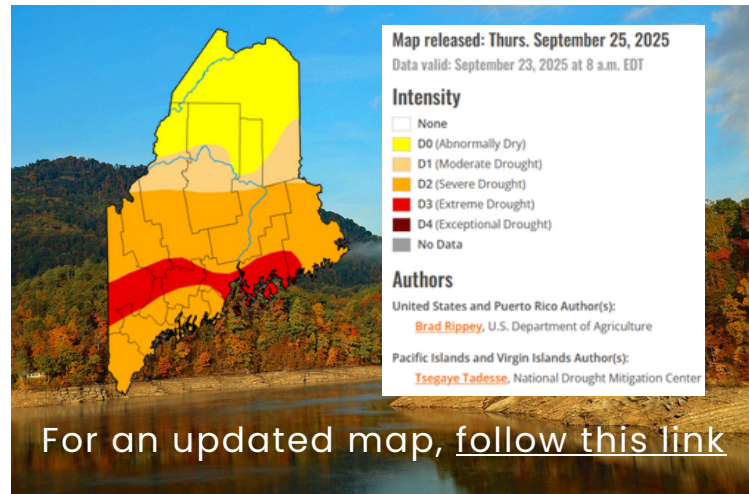
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Drought in Maine

Drought is a period of abnormally dry and/or unusually hot weather that lasts long enough to cause a serious hydraulic imbalance. Droughts normally develop and end slowly with long lasting impacts. Areas that have experienced a drought are also at a higher risk of flash flooding because the dry ground cannot effectively absorb rainwater.



**EPA Drought Checklist for
Water Systems**

Much of Maine is currently experiencing drought conditions, as shown in the US Drought Monitor Map of Maine. While Maine may experience some rain in the coming weeks, there's a good chance that surface and groundwater resources won't be recharged until later in the fall, when the annual fall rains typically arrive. The DWP requests that any public water supplier requesting voluntary or mandatory conservation measures from their customers must notify and share a copy of the messaging with the DWP. The PUC also has a rule requiring notification for conservation measures (see page 2 for more details).

**For questions regarding droughts, or to report a water shortage,
please contact your PWS Inspector or call the DWP at 207-287-2070.**

Water Supply Emergency

You can declare a Water Supply Emergency if:

- Source water is insufficient to meet demand
- Directed by federal or Maine authorities (e.g., CDC or DWP)
- Maintenance or repair substantially limits ability to meet demand
- Other conditions substantially limit ability to meet demand

How to Notify the PUC:

- Notify the PUC of the implementation and removal of the restrictions within 24-hours via email or phone.

How to Notify Customers:

- Notify customers as soon as “reasonably practicable” via mail, email, text, webpage, public postings or any combination.
- Describe the emergency and the specific conservation measures

Violations:

- Violations may result in a fee of twice the reconnection fee.
- Each 24-hours of non-compliance is a separate violation

Report water emergencies to:

Jody McColman at
Jordan.D.McColman@Maine.gov



Recommendations you can make to customers:

OUTSIDE WATER USE:

- Avoid/reduce watering lawns particularly during warmer hours.
- Keep lawns longer to help retain moisture.
- Water garden only when necessary, and avoid midday to prevent water loss by evaporation. Also consider rain barrels to collect roof runoff.



INSIDE WATER USE:

- Take shorter showers and avoid baths.
- Turn off the water while brushing teeth and shaving.
- Wash only FULL loads of clothes and dishes.
- Fix any leaks that you may find: sinks, toilets, spigots, etc.
- Adapt plumbing with water saving devices

For more information click here:

[Chapter 620](#)





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The cost of public fire suppression that is charged to towns, is **not a hydrant rental.**



Fire Suppression Charges

Utilities generally use one of two methods to determine rates charged to towns for fire suppression. “The Curve” is often used to determine the amount to charge. Alternately, a full allocation study can help determine the amount that fire suppression infrastructure and services is costing the utility. An allocation study can be quite expensive for utilities.

When a utility does a rate case, the amount that is billed to towns for fire suppression increases. Towns generally don’t understand how this amount is determined and often asked if there are ways they can lower the cost.

For this reason, the PUC created guides and a video on fire suppression for utilities and customers to better understand how it works.

Click to see the guides:

- **Guide 1:** explaining why towns pay for fire suppression
- **Guide 2:** explaining how the fire suppression fee is calculated
- **Guide 3:** explaining the costs of private sprinklers to customers

Click to see the video:

Video: This is a video you can share with your town or board to explain how fire suppression costs are determined

You can use these materials to educate your staff, board members, town officials, fire departments and customers. Feel free to print them out, use them at town budget meetings or share them on your website.





Customer Info & FOAA

Utilities no longer need to share customer information in the event of a Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) request according to newly passed law, LD 251 (An Act to Protect the Confidentiality of Information of Individual Customers of a Public Utility).

Previous to passage of this statute, FOAA overrode chapter 660 of the PUC Rules; this is no longer the case.

Click here to see: [Chapter 660](#) and [LD 251](#)



Small Rate Cases Just Got Easier

Maine statute 35-A M.R.S. § 6104-B allows utilities to do a small rate case with very little work. In the past, by utilizing this rate case, utilities were able to raise rates by up to 1.5% of the *utility's revenue*. Recently, however, the legislature approved a change in the language of the rule, allowing for utilities to now increase rates **up to 1.5% of current rates**.

This change means that a utility can look at their current tariff sheet and multiply each rate by up to 1.5%, instead of determining revenue and allocating it across rate payers by class (including public fire suppression rates) which significantly simplifies the process.

For more information on rate cases, check out the guides on the PUC [website](#).



Schedule of Water Rates

Meter charge	Per Month	Increase	New Rate
5/8"	12.00	1.5%	\$12.18
3/4"	15.00	1.5%	\$15.23
1"	20.00	1.5%	\$20.30
1 1/2"	32.00	1.5%	\$32.48



Insider Threats

Insiders threats at a water utility are often disgruntled employees.

Current and former utility employees have physically and digitally attacked water infrastructure in the USA. While uncommon, it is a persistent and potentially acute threat. Insider manipulation or disruption of water systems could have devastating consequences for public health and safety.

These insider threats could be maliciously motivated current or former employees who maintain active credentials. They represent a key vulnerability to the water sector.

The water industry's shift to remote management and digital operational technology makes site management more efficient and convenient. However, it also can enable a knowledgeable insider to cause significant harm (such as exploiting privileged access to disable water treatment system safeguards and disinfection processes).

Insiders can also physically tamper with controls or damage equipment.

Insider threats can be domestic or foreign, as hostile nation-states pose an increasing risk to critical infrastructure. Foreign actors may attempt to gain employment at an organization to utilize their access to the organization's network to collect sensitive or proprietary information, which they can later use to extort the company.

Water utilities are encouraged to conduct an end-to-end review of their employee population and their applicants (pending or previously applied) to assess the risk within the organization.

Enhanced cyber hygiene and physical access practices, particularly in the event of an employee's departure, as well as insider threat awareness training, could reduce water sector vulnerabilities to malicious insiders.

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SECURITY TIPS

1

Restrict access to necessary personnel

2

Change locks and passwords regularly

3

Require staff training on cyber and physical security



DWSRF Loans

The Drinking Water Program is now accepting applications for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) to help public water systems finance infrastructure projects.

**APPLY
NOW**

**Applications are
open until
October 10th**



Reasons to use the SRF Program:

- The loans are low interest
- Disadvantaged communities get a portion of the loan forgiven



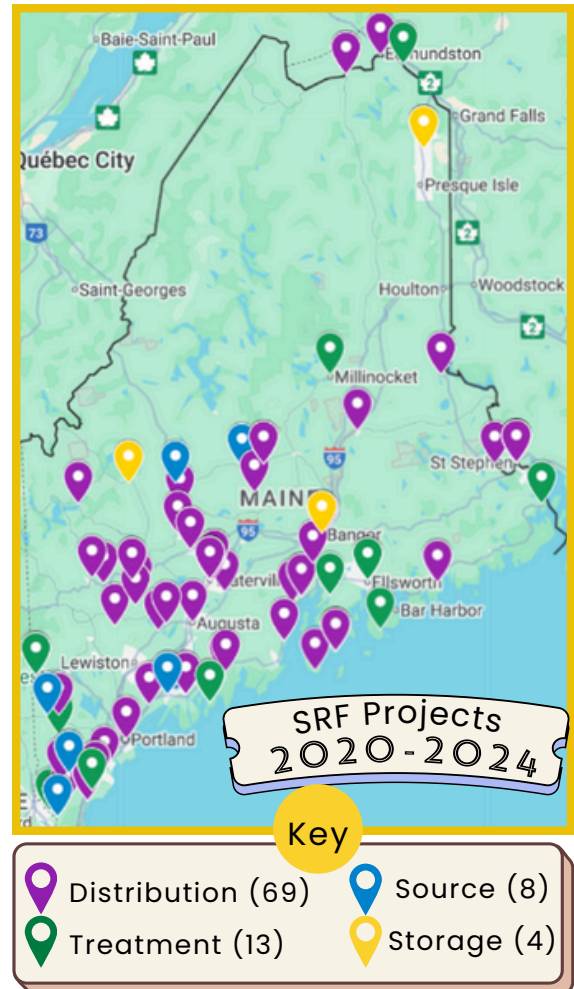
- The money that you use to repay the loan goes back into Maine Drinking Water Program's SRF program to support future projects

Keep in mind this is the last year the of having access to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding.

What does that mean?

This federal program boosted drinking water project funding from 2022-2026. With future SRF funding levels uncertain – and supplemental and emerging contaminant (PFAS) funding set to sunset after this cycle – now is the time to act. If you have a project in mind, submit an application by October 10th.

The DWSRF program has funded projects all over the state. The map below shows the utilities that have received SRF funding from 2020-2024 (note some water systems have received funding for more than one project).



MORE INFO

[Link to the DWP SRF Page](#)
[Link to the 2026 SRF application](#)

If you have questions about Maine's DWSRF Program, please contact McKenzie Parker:

✉ mckenzie.parker@maine.gov
☎ (207) 557-2255

DWP Website Changes

The Maine Drinking Water Program has recently shifted our website to better align within the CDC and DHHS. Previous links and bookmarks will no longer direct correctly and commonly used pages and documents may take time to find.



Below are updated links for resources. If you're still struggling to find information, please reach out to DWP staff for help!

[Staff Directory](#)

[Technical Assistance](#)

[Funding Programs](#)

[Water Sampling](#)

[Annual Drinking Water Fee](#)

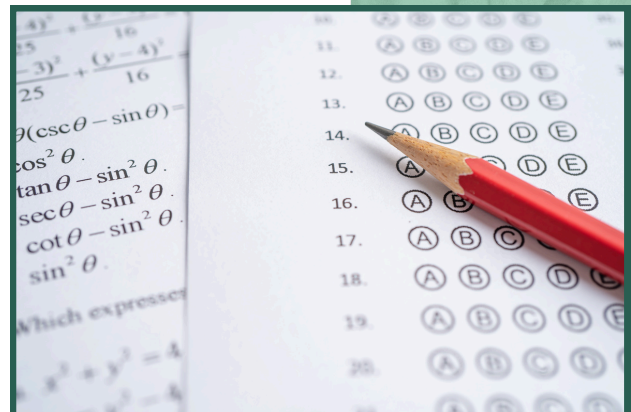
[Drinking Water Orders & Safety Alerts](#)

Water Operator Licensing

Water Professionals International (WPI) has updated the national standardized water operator certification exams with a scaled scoring system and Need-To-Know Criteria based on modern job analysis of national operator surveys.

The Maine Board of Licensure of Water System Operators has reviewed and approved the new versions of the exams across all four levels of Treatment and Distribution. The adoption date for the WPI exams is January 1st, 2026.

WPI Testing FAQ



This newsletter has information for a variety of water systems and not all of them are regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Additionally, information provided doesn't necessarily apply to all water system types. It intended for informational purposes only. This information is not legal advice and does not set any legal standard. Regulated public utilities must comply with Maine law and regulations and should consult with legal counsel for interpretation of laws and regulations.

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