



STRAIGHT FROM THE TAP

Quarterly Newsletter For Maine Water Systems



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Cybersecurity for Public Water Systems

The Maine CDC Drinking Water Program (DWP) is launching a voluntary **Cybersecurity Plan for Maine Public Water Systems** (PWSS). The kick-off event is a cybersecurity tabletop exercise on **January 29, 2025**, facilitated by the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).



The DWP has worked with cybersecurity subject-matter experts including CISA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the development and implementation of the Plan. The 3 main goals of the Plan are to: 1) increase the cyber resilience of PWSS through assessments and adoption of best practices, 2) offer resources to PWSS to enhance cyber resilience, and 3) connect PWSS with cybersecurity experts to perform cybersecurity assessments.

The DWP will not receive or store security-sensitive information on PWS cybersecurity. The DWP will use general findings from the assessments to evaluate the overall cyber resilience of PWSS, inform education and training strategies going forward, and gauge improvement in PWS cybersecurity posture over time. The first year of Plan implementation will wrap-up with a second Tabletop Exercise, which aims to synthesize and build upon lessons learned from the assessments. The DWP anticipates that EPA will promulgate cybersecurity regulations for the water sector in the future, which DWP will administer.



5 Tips for Cybersecurity



USE STRONG PASSWORDS

- Long - at least 15 characters
- Random - use upper and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols
- Unique - use different passwords for each account



TURN ON MFA

Using Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) to make it more difficult for hackers to gain access to systems,



RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF PHISHING

- Urgent/alarming language
- Requests for personal or financial info
- Poor grammar or misspelling
- Incorrect email addresses or links



KEEP SOFTWARE UPDATED

Update software when needed to patch security flaws and vulnerabilities in the software



SECURE, PROTECT AND BACK UP SENSITIVE DATA

- Change passwords any time there is employee turnover
- Regularly back up data to cloud storage
- Limit administrative privileges

For more Information:

Check out the Drinking Water Program's cybersecurity webpage [here](#)

OR

Contact Josh Laufer, Cybersecurity & Resilience Coordinator



Preparing for Winter Storms



Winter Impacts to drinking water systems may include:

- Pipe breaks
- Loss of power and communication
- Access issues due to ice and debris
- Staffing issues due to unsafe travel
- Source water quality impacts from road salt
- Flooding risks
- Ice blocking surface water intakes

How to prepare

- Review and updated your emergency response plan (ERP) ensuring all emergency contacts are accurate.
- Have the utility properly prioritized for plowing and road salting/sanding.
- Inventory of equipment and have extra equipment and supplies on hand.
- Determine how limited staffing due to transportation issues or evacuations will impact your response procedures
- Confirmed and document your generator connection type, capacity load and fuel consumption. Test it regularly, exercise under load and service backup generators,
- Collaborate with your local power provider and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to ensure that your water utility is on the critical facilities list for priority electrical power restoration, generators and emergency fuel.

Have you joined
Maine WARN yet?



It is the Maine
Water/Wastewater Agency
Response Network.

Join here: [WARN](#)



Customer Privacy

A water utility may not disclose, sell, or transfer individual customer information without their consent.

Utilities shall not disclose customers:

- Name
- Phone number
- Payment history
- Address
- Water usage

Utilities can disclose information for:

- Debt collection
- Credit reporting
- Usage reporting
- Law enforcement agencies
- Sewer departments billing
- Emergency Management

[See Chapter 660 Section 4](#)

Issuance of Securities

Consumer owned utilities no longer need to submit an application to issue securities, as the PUC no longer needs to approve the issuance of securities.

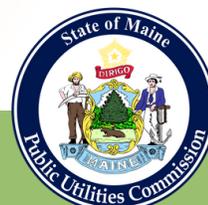
In 2023, the legislature updated the rule to no longer require PUC approval for utilities' bonds and loans. The reason being that utilities are overseen by a board of trustees or



municipality and they have local control. However, some utilities have the requirement to get PUC approval specifically written into their charter. If your utility's charter says you require PUC approval, you will need to continue to ask for approval for the issuance of securities at this time.

[See Title 35-A, §901](#)

Maine Public Utilities Commission



Utilities Working Together

Water utilities can build resiliency by working together. There are varying degrees of collaborating and relationship building and it all starts with networking.

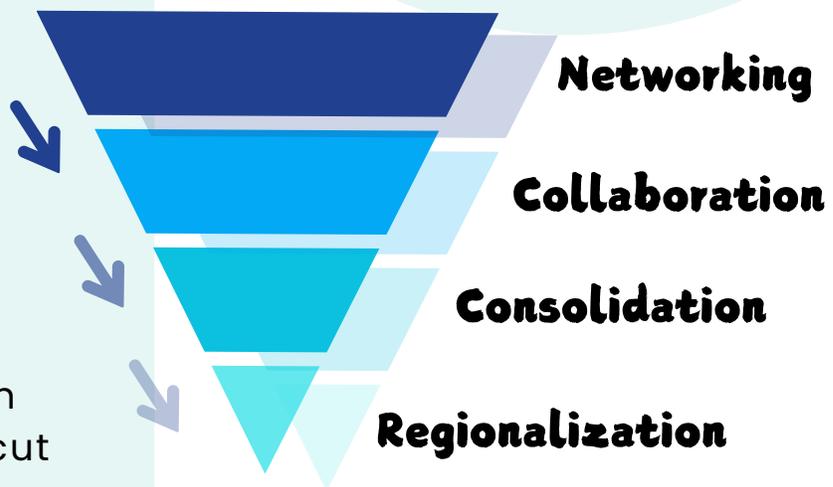
Networking: Get to know other water utilities. This will create an opportunity for sharing ideas and aid in emergency situations and can be the building blocks for further collaboration.

Collaboration: Sharing resources such as staff, equipment, or services with another utility is a way to cut down on costs. This will ensure a high standard of service and operational efficiency.

Consolidation: Water utilities can tackle larger projects and challenges that would be difficult to manage alone by consolidating. Consolidation can be resource sharing but can also be through fully combining

utilities and being run by one board. This can create a resilient and adaptable water system for the future.

Regionalization: Collaborating with a group of utilities in your area will create greater stability and more cost saving and resiliency opportunities.



More Resources:

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) has put together a guide on regional collaboration: Click here: [RCAP GUIDE](#)



REMINDERS



Emergencies

Public Water Systems are required to report all drinking water emergencies to the Maine Drinking Water Program within 24 hours of occurrence.

Main Line: (207) 287-2070

After-Hours Emergency: (207) 557-4214

PUC Annual Reports

Annual financial reports are due to the PUC by **April 1st** each year. These do not need to be audited reports.

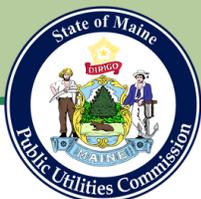


Class II Representative

The Board of Licensure of Water Treatment Plant Operators is looking for a Class II Representative. If interested, please reach out to [Mary Bowers \(Board Chair\)](#) and submit the application forms to Governor Mills. The forms can be [found here](#).

Maine Public Utilities Commission

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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 by the Drinking Water Program (DWP) doesn't necessarily apply to all water system types.