

# 7 CONTINGENCY PLANS

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Subsection 1428 (a)(5) of the 1986 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act specifies that the Wellhead Protection Program require public water systems to develop contingency plans “ *...for the location and provisions of alternate drinking water supplies for each public water system in the event of well or wellfield contamination...*” The NNEPA PWSSP requires that Emergency Water Supply Plans (EWSP) be developed by the water owner and that the aforementioned statement be implemented to complete an EWSP.

Contingency planning is important for all systems because, even with careful planning, unforeseen incidents can occur. Groundwater contamination can still occur due to leaks, spills, accidental releases, illegal discharges and other activities in and around the wellhead protection area. Properly prepared and updated contingency plans ensure the water system, and local officials, are prepared to respond to emergency situations and able to provide alternative sources of drinking water.

Developing a long term contingency plan can be a very educational experience. Jurisdictions that cannot identify economically feasible alternative long term drinking water supplies may require and desire a more stringent management program to prevent contamination.

Both short and long term alternative drinking water supplies should be identified in the contingency plan. For example, to prevent contaminants from reaching a well, it may be necessary to cease pumping until remedial actions can be taken. In the worst-case scenario, a water owner may need to abandon a well due to contamination. When developing contingency plans, the water system owner should:

1. Identify maximum water system capacity in relation to source and distribution system. Assume loss of largest well/wellfield and reevaluate;
2. Evaluate the expansion options of the existing system’s capacity to meet current water availability;
3. Identify existing or potential interties with other public water systems and evaluate the ability to deliver water assuming loss of largest well/wellfield, include costs associated with the purchase and/or delivery of alternate supplies;
4. Evaluate current procedures and make recommendations on contingency plans for emergency events;
5. Identify future potential sources of drinking water and describe quality assurances and control methods to be applied to ensure protection of water quality prior to utilization as a drinking water supply; and

**6. Maintain a current list of appropriate emergency phone numbers.**

Costs associated with obtaining alternative sources of supply, in both the short and long term, should be estimated within the contingency plan section. In the event that analysis shows no alternative sources of supply or interties are available, the contingency plan should clearly state this and then proceed to analyze treatment options for the potential contaminant sources determined to pose the highest risk to the source of supply.

The contingency plan should be completed within one (1) year of the wellhead protection area boundaries being delineated, with suggested updating every two years; more often if the situation warrants.