

ERP's, Updating and Applying

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NYRWA State Circuit Riders

Most water systems in New York State have some form of an ERP, even if it is not required for your size system. The ERP for your system may be simplified to emergency call lists and protocols, but it is an ERP none the less. Now, if you are reading this and have said to yourself, "what is an ERP?", then I guess we should start there. An ERP is an Emergency Response Plan. Many organizations and agencies provide guidance or templates on how to complete an ERP. NYRWA has an ERP template on our website at www.nyruralwater.org, then click on downloads. You will find our template ready for your use at this site.

Within the last year, USDA has advised us that an ERP & VA (Vulnerability Assessment) will be required from systems of any size to receive funding. That's right, to receive funding through USDA, you must have a completed ERP & VA. We at NYRWA realize your time is precious, so our website contains templates for both under our downloads section on our home page. The NYSDOH Emergency Response Unit is also conducting ERP training throughout the state. At this training, each system will work on a draft using a computer provided. Don't Panic!!!! If you need help using a computer, there will be personnel on hand to assist you. When you leave this training, you will have a copy of your completed ERP for yourself and for your local Health Dept.

WHEW, now that we have completed our ERP, we can just throw it in a drawer and leave it, right? Well, then again, maybe we should review some of the information with other employees just in case they need to react to an emergency situation when we are not there. Remember, practice makes perfect!! The more you review your standard emergency response procedures and practice your response to various emergencies, the better your dept. will become at handling these situations.

Okay, now you have drafted an ERP and all your employees are comfortable with the policies. We must be able to throw this thing in the trash by now? Let's just keep it around a little bit longer. As we all know, employees hopefully one day retire or move on, as do elected officials, police chiefs, fire chiefs, emergency managers, etc..., so this document is going to require constant updating and practicing. Now, when we say constant, we actually mean annually at a minimum, and perhaps semi-annually, if significant changes have occurred within your organization. You need to keep all contact information current, along with names, locations, phone numbers and so on.

Your ERP is not just a document to keep you in the good graces of the NYSDOH or funding agencies. It is essential to the day-to-day operation of your water system. You may customize your plan to meet specific needs of your community, such as assisting the elderly or people on life

support systems. The ERP will provide you with a documented plan to utilize when responding to anything from a hazardous materials spill to a water line break. As stated before, if you document and then begin responding to water main breaks a certain way, a proper and safe way, then it will become second nature and all employees will know and understand their role within the organization. The same will be true for any other situation in which you prepare a pre-plan of response.

Updating and initiating the use of all your plans, not just an ERP is a wise decision. We realize it seems overwhelming and very time consuming, but the results will be noticed immediately. If you would like to discuss initiating a plan for your system or would like any assistance getting started, please contact NYRWA at 1-888-697-8725 and leave either Morris Coolidge or Michael Batz a message. Consider how this could benefit your system.

Briefly, we would like to say Thank You to Keith Herbert our former Training Specialist who has left our organization to pursue a position operating and managing several water and wastewater systems. Keith was always a huge help to both of us and we will miss his personality and knowledge, not to mention his wife's cooking!! Good luck and best wishes Keith, now and in the future. ♠



From left: James D. Baker, Project Manager and Gregory E. Cummings, P.E. from our water/wastewater design team.

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