

Vulnerability Assessments and Emergency Response Plans (VA & ERP):

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Most all are familiar with the Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Bioterrorism Act) requiring medium-sized and large-sized community water systems (serving populations greater than 3,300) to assess vulnerability to terrorist attacks and to develop emergency response plans for

such events. Recent natural disasters have only highlighted the need for such response plans.

To ensure safe, reliable water supplies and financial viability, Vulnerability Assessments and Emergency Response Plans are essential for all water and wastewater systems of any size. The Rural Development Water and Environmental Program (WEP) Homeland Security Initiative directly addresses that need.

Therefore, every water and wastewater system financed by USDA-Rural Development will be required to complete a VA and ERP. All "Letters of Conditions" for financing will contain this requirement. New systems will

have an ERP at the start of operations and a VA within one year. All existing borrowers will be reviewed for compliance.

Rural Development will develop a list of borrowers that need assistance to meet this requirement. A copy of the certification will be requested from each Rural Development financed community (not a copy of the Actual VA or ERP documents).

New York State Rural Development will work very closely with your New York Rural Water Association to accomplish this mandate. You will be receiving details regarding implementation of the process.

In conclusion, our primary objective is to ensure that our borrowers have taken the necessary steps to protect their systems and their customers. Technical assistance will be provided to those communities that need this assistance to comply with the requirement.

For more on this issue and other USDA Rural Development matters, please feel free to contact Mr. David A. Miller, P.E., Community Program Director at (315) 477-6427 or email david.miller@ny.usda.gov. ♠