

MAKE IT PERSONAL

By Steve Freeman

As I sit here on this hot, humid day of mid-August writing this article, I can't help but wonder what the weather will be like when this winter issue of Aquafacts reaches you.

One of the many services your association offers is assistance with your Vulnerability Assessments (VA) and Emergency Response plans (ERP). I have been fortunate enough to help a few systems with these documents. You compose these documents so that in an emergency or natural disaster your water or wastewater system is prepared to respond accordingly. While reviewing the information in these plans I started thinking about what a great idea it would be to construct our own ERP for any issues in our private lives that may arise. "Make it personal".

In most cases when a situation arises in the community, the water & wastewater professionals are called away from home to assist. What if at the same time that emergency has also affected your home or family. Who will back you up, or where will your family go? An ERP template can be obtained from the NYRWA website, home page-resources tab-downloads to use as a guide. You can alter the template to make it your own if you wish. Issues such as a power outage. Who do you call? Is the outage prolonged? Do you rely on power to heat your home or operate a water pump? Maybe you have a generator, great! Do you have it on a test schedule to make sure it will be operational in time of need? I have found myself, that a simple, battery- operated, re-chargeable power supply will operate my pellet stove for four hours as well as provide additional outlets for a light or two and cell phone charge port. A quick solution to sustain for a bit. These can be found at most home or auto stores for around \$150.00. What if your water heater or water pump fails, who do call? Is the last plumber you called still in business? Fire, flood, natural disaster, well you call 911 of course, but what will you do after? Have a contingency plan in place. Use your plan. Where will your family go? Who can you call for help? Issues on the home front will run both ends of the range from small to large. Your emergency contact list will be quite similar to your water/wastewater systems list. Include, electric, gas and water/sewer companies, electrician, plumber, general contractor. Going more personal, you may want to add, appliance repair technician, doctor's office, pharmacy, hospital, names of family or friends. Under assets you may want to include model, size and serial numbers of important appliances, water pump, water heater, washer, dryer, generator and so-on. You may want to include a medication and dosage list for each member of the household. Do you have an emergency escape plan in the event of fire? If you do, practice it and include it in your personal ERP. Have firearms? Include model and serial numbers under assets. Another useful tip I will pass along, back your vehicles in your driveway or garage. This will make for a much more efficient exit in an emergency. If garaged, make sure the emergency release of the overhead door opener is operational, oil or grease as needed.

The content of a personal ERP is up to the author, it can be as creative as you wish, everyone will be different. These are just a few guidelines, print a couple of copies, let everyone in the household know where it is, put a copy in the safe or with other important documents. Be sure that everyone in the household is familiar with the plan and be sure to review and update regularly, at least annually. As we go through the winter months the workload is hopefully a bit slower, take time to review and update your system's existing plans and maybe create your own personal plan. Be prepared and safe at both work and home so that together we can continue to provide "Quality on Tap". 💧💧💧



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