

Summary - Preparing A Water Shortage Response Plan

The purpose of a water shortage response is to prevent a drinking water emergency by temporarily reducing demand during times of limited supply, such as during a drought or as a result of natural disasters. All Group A water systems are required to have a water shortage response plan. Below is a summary of steps to consider when developing your plan. [Detailed guidance and templates on how to prepare a Water Shortage Response Plan.](#)

Identify shortage events. Develop a list of events that could cause a water shortage. Create an action plan for each and assign specific duties to each employee. At a minimum, evaluate the potential for drought, earthquake, high winds, ice storm, flood, equipment failure, construction accident, unusual high customer usage, and low source production.

Evaluate supply and demand. Source and service meters are the best way to get supply and demand information. Meters can show seasonal changes and may identify problems such as declining source production or increasing summer demand due to changing use patterns. This information can help you understand the magnitude of different water shortage events.

Set stages and criteria. Response requirements vary by event type and severity. Consider the number of response stages appropriate for the size and complexity of your water system. For example, a voluntary restriction may be enough to reduce demand by 5%, but if 10% or more is needed, mandatory restrictions may be necessary.

Identify other sources. Identify alternate water supply options and what events would need to occur to use each alternative. Examples: sample and connect an emergency well, construct a short intertie with a neighboring system, connect to a system one mile away, truck water in, or provide bottled water. Determine requirements for supplying each alternate source to your customers, including public notice.

Communications. What do customers need to know and how will you tell them? Explain response stages, what they mean, and why they are developed. Your customers' actions help to make the event less severe, so tell them!

Set demand reduction measures. Consider the kinds of measures you can use to reduce demand. How will you educate your consumers about their responsibilities? Will there be outdoor water use restrictions? Increased use monitoring and enforcement? Will different customer classes have different restrictions than others? Rate surcharges?

Put it all together. Your response plan will need your customers to reduce demand, make sure the governing body formally adopts the plan. Don't wait until the shortage occurs— everything should be ready before you need to implement.

Quick facts:

- Mandatory outdoor water use ban in Boistfort Valley = outlast a 40% supply deficit without outages.
- Voluntary use restriction used in Ryderwood during shortage = trucking water in not necessary.