Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)/Drinking Water Program (DWP)

In the Main Newsletter – 2/6/2026

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In The Main - The Drinking Water Updates can be found online at the MassDEP Communication to Public Water Suppliers Website or at the Statehouse Archives which has a searchable database.

Lion dancers at Ecotarium in Worcester, MA, Image Courtesy of the Ecotarium Museum of Science and Nature

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1. Available Funding Resources for Lead Service Line Replacement

0% Interest SRF Funding for Lead Service Line Planning and Replacement (Rolling Applications) With Potentially Significant Loan Forgiveness

To support compliance with LCRI requirements, MassDEP and the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust are offering 0% interest SRF financing to help PWS achieve measurable progress on lead removal. Through the State Revolving Fund (SRF), systems can access 0% interest Lead Service Line Planning Loans and 0% Interest Lead Service Line Construction Loans to support LCRI-required activities, including:

- Update your service line inventory, including resolving and identifying unknowns and documenting service line connector materials to meet the LCRI baseline inventory requirements.
- Develop or update your lead service line replacement plan and get ready to execute it.
- Complete lead service line replacement through construction, with an emphasis on full replacements (not partial).
- Meet transparency expectations by making inventory and program information accessible to the public.

All PWS may receive loan forgiveness based on the Environmentally Disadvantaged Community designation- which is a PWS that has lead in the water supply and/or lead service lines in the system. This is different than the Disadvantaged Community Designation (Affordability Calculation). PWSs who have received construction loans for LSL work have received 40% loan forgiveness! Amounts vary per project and while funding is available. See information on loan forgiveness at The Disadvantaged Community Loan Forgiveness Program | Mass.gov

These are time-limited funds! Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-serve rolling basis while funding is available.

Applications can be submitted through the SRF Portal. Please contact Kaitlyn Connors, Director of Water Investment, Kaitlyn.Connors2@mass.gov, for more information. There will be a free webinar later this month on this topic.

The Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Community (SUDC) Grant Program

The SUDC Grant Program assists eligible PWS meeting Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requirements. The program focuses on helping communities resolve health-based compliance challenges through targeted infrastructure improvements.

Eligible PWS:

PWS must meet the following 3 criteria to be eligible:

- **Small:** Serves a population under 10,000;
- **Disadvantaged:** Meets state affordability criteria based on the Clean Water Trust's definition of a disadvantaged community; and
- **Underserved:** The PWS violated the EPA's SDWA standards, including maximum contaminant levels, treatment techniques, or action level requirements.

Eligible Activities:

This grant funding can be used to update infrastructure to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act, **including the replacement of lead service lines and removing other sources of lead in water.** Note that partial lead service line replacement and replacement of premise plumbing are not eligible activities under this grant.

Learn more about eligibility requirements and eligible projects through the **SUDC Grant Program flyer**. For more information about the program, email program.director-dwp@mass.gov, subject: "SUDC Grant Program".

2. DWP/PWS Job Shadowing 2025

As a continuation of the DWP/PWS Job Shadowing Program from 2024, MassDEP/DWP coordinated another year of job shadowing between DWP staff and several PWS throughout the state. The purpose of the Job Shadowing Program is to give newer staff from DWP the training opportunity to shadow operators at PWS and observe the work operators perform on a regular basis.

From late summer 2025 through winter 2026, DWP staff from several DEP regions and the Boston office participated in job shadowing at the following PWS:

- Andover DPW – Water Treatment Plant
- Franklin DPW
- Athol DPW
- Brewster Water Department

MassDEP/DWP thanks these PWS for opening their doors to DWP staff and participating in the DWP/PWS Job Shadowing Program. We appreciate your participation and willingness to invite DWP staff to your systems!

Below are some anonymous comments from DWP and PWS staff who participated in this year's job shadowing program:

- The system showed great enthusiasm in presenting their work and sharing their experience. The experience builds good connections with the systems and DWP staff.
- The PWS staff have a wealth of knowledge that they are happy to share and you can tell they really care about what they do and the quality of service they provide to their customers.
- I think this is great to share system reality and workings to regulatory staff members.
- I thought it was really helpful learning about the multiple responsibilities of DWP staff. It was also nice getting to know the staff and having them as a future resource moving forward.

If you have any questions about the Job Shadowing Program or are interested in participating in the future, please reach out to DWP at program.director-dwp@mass.gov, Subject: PWS Job Shadowing.

3. New Fact Sheet Regarding Temporary Operator Licenses for PWS

MassDEP/DWP recently published a Fact Sheet for Public Water Systems for Temporary Emergency Certificates and Provisional Certificates. The purpose of the fact sheet is to describe Temporary Emergency Certificates (TECs) and Provisional Certificates (PCs) and highlight how a Public Water System (PWS) can apply for for a TEC or PC with the Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Supply Facilities (the Board). This fact sheet can be found on the Public Drinking Water System Operations – Certified Operators webpage.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov or the Drinking Water Board at DrinkingWaterBoard@mass.gov.

Background Information

If a PWS does not have a properly licensed operator as required by the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations (310 CMR 22.11B), the PWS can apply for a temporary license for an operator already working at the PWS. There are two types of temporary licenses, as defined in 236 CMR 4.00: Temporary Emergency Certificates (TEC) issued to the operator and Provisional Certificates (PC) issued to the PWS. The TEC license allows a specific operator to serve as a PWS's Primary or Secondary Operator while the PWS obtains a properly licensed operator – by searching for a new operator or waiting for a currently employed operator to obtain the required qualifications (i.e. examination, education, and experience). A PC license may be granted when/if a PWS's TEC expires and the PWS has not yet obtained a properly licensed operator. Both TEC and PC licenses are valid for six months and cannot be renewed. It is important to remember that the granting of TEC and PC licenses does not relieve the PWS from the responsibility of hiring an appropriately licensed operator as soon as possible.

4. Cold Weather Preparedness for PWS

Two weeks ago, on January 25 and 26, towns throughout Massachusetts experienced heavy snowstorms leaving over two feet of snow in some areas of the state. In anticipation of future snowstorms and cold weather, MassDEP/DWP reminds PWS of resources to prepare for these severe weather events and how to keep staff safe.

Preparing Your System for Winter Storms

Wintertime in Massachusetts can bring snowstorms and cold snaps. Although snow can help recharge water supplies, snowstorms with freezing temperatures or high winds can have negative impacts for water systems. Heavy snow can impact access to water infrastructure facilities or cause trees or poles to fall and damage infrastructure. High winds may cause power outages or downed trees or poles. Freezing temperatures could create icy conditions for driving or break pipes or other equipment that is not properly insulated.

MassDEP/DWP reminds public water systems to make sure they are prepared for cold-weather emergencies. This may include reviewing and updating your Emergency Response Plan, topping off back-

up power sources and vehicle fuel, exercising emergency generators, and purchasing water treatment chemicals to keep in reserve.

The following resources can be used to learn more about how water systems can properly prepare for and respond accordingly to snowstorm events.

- MassDEP Preparing for Extreme Weather Events and Response Guidance
- MassDEP Storm Preparedness & Emergency Response Resources – Water Supply
- MassDEP Public Drinking Water System Operations – Emergency Response & Public Notification
- MassDEP Emergency Response for Public Water Systems
- MassDEP Snow Disposal Guidance
- EPA Natural Disasters – Snow and Ice
- EPA Incident Action Checklist – Extreme Cold and Winter Storms

Keeping Staff Healthy in Cold Weather

Wintertime can also bring an increase in cold- and flu-related sickness. The following tips can help PWS staff stay healthy during cold and flu season.

- Wash your hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing, or touching shared surfaces.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Disinfect shared surfaces such as desks, keyboards, and phones regularly, especially in areas shared by multiple staff.
- If performing outdoors, staff should wear appropriate PPE and clothing suitable for cold weather.
- If feeling unwell or are contagious, staff should let their supervisor or manager know.

Communication with MassDEP

During or after severe snowstorm events, if you suspect contamination from oil and/or other hazardous materials, contact both your local fire department and the MassDEP Emergency Response hotline at 1-888-304-1133.

In the event of an emergency during or after a severe snowstorm event, water systems should contact MassDEP per the procedures listed in Appendix O of the Guidelines for Public Water Systems (Attachment C and D).

- During working hours (Monday – Friday between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM), contact your DEP Regional Office.
- Outside of working hours, on weekends, and on holidays, contact the DEP 24-hour Emergency Response hotline at 1-888-304-1133, followed by your DEP Regional Office.

Following a severe snowstorm event, water systems have 30 days to file an Emergency Response Report with their MassDEP regional office. Refer to the Emergency Response Reporting Guidance page for more information about the report requirements, including the report template and an example report.

Sign Up for MA WARN for Mutual Aid During Emergencies

MaWARN is a mutual aid program available for all publicly-owned water and wastewater systems in Massachusetts. Participation in MaWARN allows participating systems to receive rapid mutual aid and assistance from other public systems in Massachusetts to restore services damaged by natural or man-made incidents. Participation in MaWARN is completely voluntary: your PWS is not required to join MaWARN, and even if your system joins, you are not required to request or offer mutual aid.

More information about MaWARN and instructions on how to sign up can be found at the MaWARN website.

5. EPA Technical Assistance Opportunity: SWIFT

EPA has recently launched a new Technical Assistance opportunity called the Strengthening Water Infrastructure for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Initiative. EPA's SWIFT initiative works directly with drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities, technical assistance providers, and other water sector stakeholders across the nation to increase system resilience to natural hazards and disasters. SWIFT provides location-specific natural hazard data and practical risk assessment tools to identify and evaluate resilient strategies. Technical assistance under SWIFT promotes a better understanding of natural hazard threats and their impacts on vulnerable assets, providing the guidance needed to make risk-informed infrastructure and investment decisions. SWIFT also makes connections to infrastructure financing that help utilities fund the implementation of their hazard resilience projects.

You can learn more about this opportunity at EPA's website: Strengthening Water Infrastructure for Tomorrow (SWIFT)

6. Capacity Development and What TNCs Need to Know

Capacity Development is a foundational concept under the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act and refers to a Public Water System's ability to consistently provide safe and reliable drinking water. While it is most often associated with Community water systems, capacity development also applies to Transient Non-Community (TNC) water systems, particularly those that cannot easily shut down during emergencies or operational disruptions.

At its core, capacity development is a planning and evaluation tool used by the MassDEP Drinking Water Program to help water systems of all types identify strengths, address weaknesses, and plan for long-term compliance and sustainability.

The Three Pillars of Capacity Development (TMF)

Capacity development is made up of three interconnected components, often referred to as TMF capacity:

Technical Capacity

This refers to the physical and operational ability of a water system to meet drinking water standards. For TNCs, this includes:

- Adequacy of source, treatment, distribution, and storage
- Reliability of source water

- Operator technical knowledge and day-to-day implementation of system requirements

Managerial Capacity

Managerial capacity focuses on how well a system is run and overseen, including:

- Clear ownership and accountability
- Adequate staffing and organizational structure
- Operator training and certification

Financial Capacity

Financial capacity reflects a system's ability to fund operations and plan for the future, such as:

- Having sufficient and reliable revenue sources
- Maintaining creditworthiness
- Using sound fiscal management and controls

Even small TNC systems benefit from strong technical, managerial, and financial capacity: it helps prevent compliance issues, supports emergency preparedness, and reduces long-term costs.

How MassDEP Assesses Capacity

All public water systems receive a capacity determination from MassDEP.

- New systems receive an initial capacity determination.
- Existing systems, including TNCs, may receive an updated determination following:
    - A sanitary survey
    - A major water quality violation
    - A change in ownership
    - An application for a State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan
    - Or anytime MassDEP determines a review is necessary

MassDEP assigns one of three ratings:

- **Adequate Capacity-** The system complies with major drinking water regulations and demonstrates the ability and willingness to plan ahead.
- **Conditional Capacity-** The system generally complies with regulations but has issues that are being actively addressed or corrected under oversight.
- **Inadequate Capacity-** The system is out of compliance and does not demonstrate the ability or willingness to plan for future needs.

Understanding your capacity rating can help TNCs anticipate required actions and identify available support early. You may read more about capacity determinations on the webpage Public Water System Capacity Development - Capacity Determinations

Examples of Capacity Development Activities

Capacity development isn't a one-time requirement—it's an ongoing process. TNCs can strengthen their TMF capacity through practical actions such as:

Technical

- Evaluating infrastructure adequacy
- Reviewing source water reliability
- Improving operational practices and documentation

Managerial

- Clarifying system ownership and roles
- Ensuring trained and certified operators are in place
- Keeping records current and accessible

Financial

- Reviewing revenue sufficiency
- Planning for maintenance and replacement costs
- Strengthening budgeting and financial controls

Learn More and Get Support

MassDEP and EPA offer several resources to help water systems understand and improve their technical, managerial, and financial capacity:

- EPA – Building the Capacity of Drinking Water Systems
- EPA – Learn About Capacity Development
- MassDEP – Public Water System Capacity Development
- MassDEP – Capacity Development Strategy (December 2021)
- MassDEP Guidelines for Public Water Systems, Chapter 11 – Capacity Development and Standard Operating Procedures

Capacity development doesn't have to be complicated and TNCs don't have to navigate it alone. MassDEP remains committed to supporting water systems through outreach, training, and technical and financial assistance to help ensure safe drinking water for all users. If you have any questions, contact MassDEP DWP at program.director-dwp@mass.gov.

7. Upcoming Free VSS/T1/D1 Training for New Drinking Water Operators

Dates: March 2, 9, & 16, 2026

Time: 7:45 AM – 3:00 PM (attendance from 7:45 AM – 8:00 AM; time includes breaks and lunch)

Location: Montague Public Safety Facility – Community Room
180 Turnpike Rd
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Massachusetts Rural Water Association (MassRWA) will be hosting a 3-Day VSS/T1/D1 training in Turners Falls, MA. The purpose of the VSS, D1, & T1 Certification Exam Preparatory Course is to familiarize students with the small water system field and teach the responsibilities of certified drinking water operators. This class covers the following topics: water quality sampling, wells and their source protection, water pipes, storage tanks, hydrants, valves, meters, water treatment, how to create reports, and Massachusetts drinking water regulations. This training will show operators how to use basic math

formulas to calculating water storage, pressure, flow, and water usage. This class will prepare operators to pass the VSS, D1, and T1 exams. Operators will also earn 18 TCH credits upon successful completion of the class.

This is a 3-Day class and students must attend all classes to get credit. By doing so, operators will be more prepared to successfully pass their exam(s). Each class will be held In-Person.

Note: *MassRWA will reserve the first 5 seats for people from small systems (<10,000 population served) and need a minimum of 3 small systems to register for this class*.

Note*: Lunch is not provided, please make sure you bring your own lunch or plan to purchase locally from a local establishment!*

Schedule At a Glance…
Day 1: Introduction, Distribution, and Basic Math
Day 2: Operations & Maintenance, Treatment, and Pumps & Motors
Day 3: Regulations and Safety & Security

To sign up for this 3-day class, **Register Online**, or contact Jason Blais at jblais@massrwa.org. More information can be found at VSS, D1, & T1 Certification Exam Preparatory Course: 3-Day (18-Hours).

8. LCR, LCRR, and LCRI Updates

Updates Regarding Service Line Inventory Importation Process into the MA Database

This article is meant to update PWS on the process for updated Service Line Inventory reviews and importation into the MA database **currently and until the next SLI Workbook update, the Baseline SLI Workbook.**

Currently and until the next SLI Workbook update, MassDEP DWP will not be importing full updated inventory files containing all service line data into the MA database. Instead, MassDEP DWP will be reviewing submitted inventories, and manually updating service line totals (total number of NON-LEAD, LEAD STATUS UNKNOWN, GALVANIZED REQUIRING REPLACMENT (GRR), and/or LEAD Service) per PWS. The service line totals per PWS will then be reported to US EPA during reporting periods, and be updated in the MA SLI Summary Sheet (on a quarterly basis) which is available on the Lead in Drinking Water Homepage, the recent summary data from March 2025 is available here.

MassDEP DWP is not importing full updated inventory files as at this time, because we are finalizing a process to make sure that the locational identifiers in SLIs cannot be changed for existing service lines. As the Locational Identifier is the unique ID per service line which all updates will be tracked by, making sure this ID is consistent is key to all updates going forward. To ensure that all PWS keep the same locational identifier per round of updates, MassDEP DWP will begin processing full workbook updates after the MassDEP/DWP has updated the workbook to address the LCRI Baseline SLI Workbook requirements. This workbook is in development, and is expected to be released in late **Summer 2026.** This workbook will be prepopulated with SLI data for each PWS, which PWS can then update and resubmit. PWS will be notified when this revised workbook is final and ready for any PWS updating.

How does this impact PWS going forward?

1. PWS should continue to submit an updated SLI to MassDEP if your total number of lead, GRR, and/or Unknown service lines has changed since your last SLI submission, following the distribution of consumer notices. This is to make sure that MassDEP DWP can complete a review of your SLI CN Certification Form. Providing an updated SLI also allows MassDEP DWP to provide more accurate service line totals to EPA during reporting periods.
2. During SLI reviews, MassDEP DWP will reach out to PWS following the SLI review to confirm that their SLI has been reviewed, notify PWS of the next estimated Summary Sheet update their SLI totals will be included in, and provide recommended/required actions if needed. As the full SLI files will not be imported to the MA database at this time, minor validations errors will not impact the review of the inventory, if they do not impact the process to determine the total number of service lines per category.
3. Please note: MassDEP DWP will continue to provide error files based on inventory reviews, and note other errors found during the review process, which PWS are encouraged to review and correct now.
4. Once MassDEP/DWP notify PWS that the Baseline SLI is released, PWSs will be expected to review the information and make any updates using the Baseline SLI Workbook ahead of the LCRI deadline.
5. Upon confirmation that the PWS has checked and/or updated their inventory information, MassDEP DWP will then begin importing the PWS SLI files to the MassDEP/DWP database, include updated inventories in the MA Service Line Inventory GIS Map and also report the information to USEPA.

9. Water Smart

Water-Smart Program Update

Water-Smart (formally known as the Expanded Assistance Program) provides free analysis of lead drinking water samples and technical assistance to eligible public and private schools and early education and childcare facilities (EECFs) by assisting with sampling, results interpretation, and guidance on remediation actions. The program is funded by a grant from the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust.

Currently, 1,250 schools and EECFs are participating in the program and 1,101 (88%) of participating facilities are within economically disadvantaged communities. To date, 1,141 schools and EECFs have completed testing. Of facilities that have tested and received results, 754 (66%) had one or more lead detections.

Do you know of any schools or childcare facilities that could benefit from the Water-Smart Program? Please identify and encourage schools and childcares within your service area to participate in the program. Eligible facilities may apply for assistance at: Water-Smart Program Website .

Get Ahead with Lead Testing: Join the Water-Smart Pilot Program for Public Water Systems

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is proud to invite all Community Public Water Systems (PWS) to the *Water-Smart Pilot Program for PWS* – a forward-thinking initiative designed to help water systems stay ahead of upcoming federal regulations.

Starting **November 1, 2027**, PWS will be **required to offer** lead testing to all primary schools and childcare facilities under the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI). Only schools and childcare facilities that were built on or after January 1, 2014 – or have had full plumbing replacements since that date – and are not served by lead, galvanized requiring replacement (GRR), or lead status unknown service lines may be excluded from this requirement. Rather than wait, the *Pilot Program* gives PWS a head start—leveraging the well-established **Water-Smart Program**, which has already tested over 1,000 schools and childcare facilities across the Commonwealth.

Through the pilot program, MassDEP and UMass Amherst cover the cost of lead testing and provide all necessary outreach materials, sampling plans, and follow-up support. PWS simply help identify eligible facilities, assist with local outreach and help collect samples. The process is simple, cost-free, and designed to set you up for success when the rule goes into effect.

Participating in the Pilot Program allows PWS to:

- Offer a valuable service to schools and childcare centers now,
- Fulfill future federal requirements early,
- Build community trust, and
- Access expert technical support at no cost.

Don't wait for 2027—Be Proactive, get ahead today. For more information or to join the pilot program visit Water-Smart (Lead in School Drinking Water) Pilot Program for Public Water Suppliers | Mass.gov, or email Program.Director-DWP@mass.gov with the subject line: **"Pilot Program for PWS."**

10. Drinking Water Trivia!

Tickle your brain and test your knowledge on drinking water related information. In each issue, we will ask 1-3 questions and provide the answers somewhere else in the newsletter to encourage your sleuthing skills.

Freshwater freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. At what temperature does saltwater freeze at?

A. 0 degrees Fahrenheit
B. 16.8 degrees Fahrenheit
C. 28.4 degrees Fahrenheit
D. 30 degrees Fahrenheit

Check out the other articles while looking for the answer. If you would like to send in a Trivia question or two, please email the question and answer to program.director-dwp@mass.gov, Subject DWP Trivia.

11. Training Calendar

When you need training, please look at the MassDEP Training Calendar for Public Water System Operators.

Board of Certification Training Page and List of Approved Courses

You may also want to go to the Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Supply Facilities Operators Training Webpage and view the approved education courses to sit for examination.

Some Newly Added Trainings on the Calendar

Ask Me Anything! State Revolving Fund (SRF) Technical Assistance & Open Office Hours: Capacity Development

Monday, February 9, 2026; 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. ET; webinar
Ask Me Anything SRF Office Hours will expand your knowledge and enhance your ability to navigate the SRFs. These sessions are tailored for state agencies, utility operators, and stakeholders who support water infrastructure projects. Each session will feature a specific theme, providing clarity, strategies, and practical insights for preparing and managing an SRF funded project. Participants can attend all sessions or select those that best meet their needs. Register for the webinar: Ask Me Anything! State Revolving Fund (SRF) Technical Assistance & Open Office Hours: Capacity Development

PFAS Treatment with GAC and IX

Tuesday, February 10, 2026; 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. ET; webinar
Utilities that are now faced with their first PFAS MCLs must come up to speed fast on PFAS treatment with GAC and IX. This webinar will review key considerations for pressure vessel design and operation, including lessons learned from full-scale treatment experiences. This webinar will educate water utilities on comprehensive aspects of designing and operating PFAS treatment facilities using the two most commonly used technologies, GAC and IX, based on real-world experience from design to full-scale operation. These standard PFAS treatment technologies are often operated in pressure vessel configurations, which may be uncommon to many groundwater and surface water utilities. $75-member, $120-nonmember Register for the webinar: PFAS Treatment with GAC and IX

EFCN – Finding a Unicorn Session 6: Federal Grants & SRF Office Hours

Tuesday, February 10, 2026; 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET; webinar
We've set aside time for participants to bring ideas and questions related to their project proposals or past experiences with federal funding or SRF applications. Bring your questions, compare notes with peers, and receive direct support from the Capacity Collaborative team. Register for the webinar: EFCN – Finding a Unicorn Session 6: Federal Grants & SRF Office Hours

EFCN – Stormwater Management Essentials for Small Systems and Communities

Thursday, February 19, 2026; 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. ET; webinar
Small communities face the same stormwater challenges as large cities, flooding, pollution, and aging infrastructure but with limited budgets and staff. This 1-hour webinar provides a practical introduction to stormwater runoff and hydrology, with a focus on how stormwater affects wastewater systems and local watersheds. Participants will learn how nutrients and contaminants in runoff impact receiving waters,

and how green infrastructure can be used to manage stormwater. The webinar will end with a walkthrough of free EPA tools that can be used to support planning, decision-making, and grant applications. Register for the webinar: EFCN – Stormwater Management Essentials for Small Systems and Communities

Trainings by Organization

- **MassDEP**
  Previous Cybersecurity Trainings now on YouTube:
  - Basic Cybersecurity Measures for Water Utilities
  - Ransomware Experiences, Defense, and Response

- **Environmental Finance Center Network Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **EPA Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **Mass Rural Water Association Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **MWWA Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **NEWWA Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **Water ISAC Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **RCAP Solutions Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **AWWA Trainings, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **New England Section of AWWA, Webinars and In-Person Trainings**

- **SkillWorks**
  - SkillWorks offers Board-approved home-study correspondence courses to satisfy license renewal continuing education requirements. All correspondence courses use paper-based study materials and exams. Course work is submitted by mail. Mailed returns are processed and graded within 24 hours at no extra charge. Courses with optional online exams are processed and graded automatically to provide exam results and a printable Certificate of Completion instantly. View the list of approved courses and purchase a course online at Massachusetts SkillWorks Trainings website.

Training Refresher

If you need a refresher on recently given trainings, you can review several training videos located at The MassDEP Drinking Water Training YouTube Playlist.

12. Cybersecurity, Emergency Preparedness, and You!

PLEASE SHARE THIS CYBERSECURITY INFORATION WITH YOUR SCADA & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STAFF

For additional information and alerts see Cybersecurity Resource Hub for MA Public Water Systems (PWS). The purpose of this hub is to provide resources for public water systems (PWS) to improve cybersecurity defenses, mitigate cyber-attack risks, and enhance overall resiliency and compliance.

Cybersecurity Biweekly Spotlight

Important Alert!! Counterfeit PLC Identified at NH Water Utility: A Growing Concern for Public Water Systems

Last week, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services issued an alert about a counterfeit Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) identified at a NH municipal water utility.

PWS are encouraged to avoid gray-market /secondhand purchases. Always verify that PLCs and other control devices are genuine, and purchase equipment only from authorized suppliers or manufacturers.

Why This Matters:
PLCs control essential PWS functions, including pumps, chemical feed systems, and SCADA communication. A counterfeit device can lead to:

- Unexpected equipment failures
- Incorrect sensor readings
- Loss of manufacturer support
- Increased cybersecurity exposure

Even a single compromised PLC can disrupt the water operations or threaten water quality.

What PWS Should Do

- Buy only from authorized distributors
- Verify serial numbers with the manufacturer
- Document procurement sources and maintain chain of custody records
- Inspect firmware behavior and investigate unusual communication or update failures
- Train staff to recognize suspicious packaging or inconsistent labeling

For additional recommendations see the Alert here: Counterfeit PLCs WWS Advisory

Additional Resources

- **Unauthorized Sources and Counterfeit Products | Rockwell Automation | US**
- **Partner Locator | Rockwell Automation | US**

Important Alert!! Protect Your PWS From Phishing Attacks

Cyberattacks against critical infrastructure including water sector are increasing, and phishing remains the number one entry point. With AI and emerging technologies making phishing attempts more

convincing than ever, staying vigilant is essential. Don't become the next victim.

- Phishing occurs when criminals try to get us to open harmful links, emails, or attachments that could request our personal information or infect our devices.
- Phishing messages or "bait" usually come in the form of an email, text, direct message on social media, or phone call.
- These messages are often designed to mimic a trusted person or organization, to get us to respond.

Why Phishing is Such a Risk

Phishing emails are designed to look legitimate. They may appear to come from:

- Vendors or contractors
- Management or IT support
- Banks or payment services
- Shipping companies (UPS, FedEx, USPS)

These emails often **create urgency**: "invoice overdue", "account locked", "verify your PWS information in 24/48 Hours", "package delivery failed". Clicking a link or opening an attachment can install malware, steal login credentials, or encrypt data. Once attackers gain access to IT networks they may get into OT systems.

Before clicking:

- Verify the sender address carefully
- Hover over links to check the actual URL (destination)
- Don't open unexpected attachments, or click links
- Confirm Request: the best to avoid phishing attacks is to verify sensitive information requests in person. Call the person who sent the request to verify that its legitimate.

SCADA And OT Computers Must Be Treated Differently

Best practices:

1. **Do not use SCADA/OT computers for**: Email, web browsing, social media, file downloads, USB drives without authorization.
2. **Limit Or Eliminate Internet Access**

   Whenever possible:

   - **No Direct Internet Connection**: SCADA systems should have no direct internet connection
   - If internet access is unavoidable, use **strict firewalls.**
   - Only allow required, approved communications, **access control and user authentication** should be in place.

     Remember: Air-gapped or tightly controlled systems significantly reduce attack risk.
3. **Segment networks**

Network segmentation is one of the most effective defenses.

Separate:

- Business/IT network
- OT/SCADA network

- Remote/vendor access

Use firewalls and controlled gateways between segments. If the office network is compromised by phishing, segmentation prevents attackers from reaching control systems.

Grants and Fundings

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund in partnership with MassDEP/DWP, is offering grants funds of up to **$50,000**, to PWSs that have a cybersecurity risk assessment and use operational technology equipment with an identified cybersecurity risk.
Details here: Public Water Suppliers Cybersecurity Improvements Grant Program | Mass.gov.

Important Reminder: Is your PWS scheduled for a sanitary survey in 2026?

If your PWS is scheduled for a sanitary survey in 2026, MassDEP/DWP will inspect your cybersecurity assessment findings and plans during the upcoming sanitary survey cycle. Details here.
Please prepare your PWS for the MassDEP cybersecurity assessment review. Preparation may include:

- Signing up for a FREE USEPA Cybersecurity Assessment EPA's Water Sector Cybersecurity Evaluation Program | US EPA.
- For additional options see https://www.mass.gov/doc/reminder-sanitary-survey-cybersecurity-programassessment-report-inspection/download

13. Supply Chain Reminders

PWSs are reminded to implement the steps identified by DWP using the Steps to Prepare Your PWS For Supply Chain Disruptions Flyer and keep MassDEP/DWP informed of all Supply Chain issues.

EPA Chemical Supplier and Manufacturer Locator Tool : This tool allows water and wastewater utilities to search for suppliers and manufacturers across the U.S. that may be able to fulfill their chemical supply needs and increase resilience to supply chain disruptions. This tool can also be useful for finding alternative chemical suppliers in the case of supply chain shortages.

14. How To Subscribe to the In The Main Newsletter

To subscribe to the *In The Main Newsletter*, send a blank email to join-dep-dwp-subscribers@listserv.state.ma.us.

MassDEP is sending this important drinking water information to all PWS responsible persons who are listed on the state database. If you are no longer the correct responsible person for the PWS please reply with the correct contact information. MassDEP needs one responsible contact person from each PWS. Operators, consultants, and others who are interested in Drinking Water Program updates are encouraged to request to be subscribed to this email list. To subscribe to the *In The Main Newsletter*, send a blank email to join-dep-dwp-subscribers@listserv.state.ma.us. This MassDEP Program Director technical assistance email is funded by the Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment (Section 70) Program. The Assessment is paid by all consumers of public water in Massachusetts and is collected by public

water systems. For more information about the Assessment Program, visit to the Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment Advisory Committee ("Section 70" Committee) Homepage.

15. Drinking Water Trivia! Answer

Answer: C

Saltwater freezes at a lower temperature due to the salt content