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

In the Main Newsletter – 08/25/2026

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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.



Gerow Park, Warner's Pond, Concord, photo by: Eric Cheung

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1. MassDEP/UMass Amherst Webinars – Fall 2026

MassDEP Drinking Water Program, in partnership with UMass Amherst, is hosting a series of free webinars during the fall to provide training and information for operators. Operators will be able to earn Training Contact Hours (TCHs) for attending these webinars.

Information Session for Vocational Technical Schools and Students: Career Opportunities as a Drinking Water Operator (VSS/D1/T1)

Thursday, September 10, 2026; 10:00 – 11:00 am ET; webinar

This free, virtual information session is to learn about career opportunities and the responsibilities involved in working as a Very Small System (VSS), Distribution (D1), or Treatment (T1) Drinking Water Operator. This introductory session is designed for vocational technical school students and others interested in pursuing a career in the drinking water field. Topics will include water quality sampling, wells and source protection, water pipes, storage tanks, hydrants, valves, meters, water treatment, Massachusetts drinking water regulations, and other essential operator responsibilities. The session will also explain the steps needed to prepare for and pass the VSS, D1, and T1 certification exams and will highlight current career and job opportunities in the field. Water supply professionals will be available to answer questions and provide additional guidance and follow-up support.

Register for the webinar: Information Session for Vocational Technical Schools and Students: Career Opportunities as a Drinking Water Operator (VSS/D1/T1)

Operator Certification Q&A Session

Thursday, September 17, 2026; 10:00 – 11:00 am ET; webinar

Join UMass Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) for a FREE virtual Q&A and office hours session designed to help drinking water operators and other interested individuals navigate the operator certification process. Participants can ask questions and receive guidance on topics such as the Board of Certification, licensing requirements, operator certification pathways, license types, exam registration, license applications, experience calculations, training and certification requirements, testing tips, renewal cycles, online resources, and frequently asked questions. This session provides an opportunity to connect directly with technical assistance providers, get answers to certification-related questions, and learn where to find additional resources and support.

Register for the webinar: Operator Certification Q&A Session

Supply Chain Chemical Cooperatives (Eastern MA Chemical Cooperative)

Wednesday, October 7, 2026; 10:00 – 11:00 am ET; webinar

This one-hour informational session will focus on how public water systems (PWS) can work together through a chemical cooperative to address supply chain challenges. The session will review how PWS can collaborate to obtain competitive pricing, streamline and consolidate the administrative work

involved in sourcing chemicals from manufacturers, and improve the reliability of their chemical supply. The presentation will highlight how a cooperative approach can increase resilience to supply chain disruptions by helping PWS identify alternative chemical suppliers and respond effectively to shortages or other disruptions to the supply chain. Participants can receive 1 TCH for successful completion of the webinar.

Register for the webinar: Supply Chain Chemical Cooperatives (Eastern AM Chemical Cooperative)

1-Day VSS/D1/T1 Certified Drinking Water Operator Training

Thursday, October 8, 2026; 8:30 – 12:00 pm ET; webinar

This free, virtual introductory training is for individuals interested in becoming a Very Small System (VSS), Distribution (D1), or Treatment (T1) Drinking Water Operator. The course is designed for individuals who are new to the field, as well as current operators looking to strengthen their knowledge and prepare for certification. Topics will include water quality sampling, wells and source protection, water distribution pipes, storage tanks, hydrants, valves, meters, water treatment, Massachusetts drinking water regulations, and other essential operator responsibilities. The session will also review the steps needed to prepare for and successfully pass the VSS, D1, and T1 certification exams. Participants can receive 3 TCHs for successful completion of the webinar.

Register for the webinar: 1-Day VSS/D1/T1 Certified Drinking Water Operator Training

2. Apply Today! Up to $50,000 in LSL Replacement Assistance for Small Systems

The MassDEP Lead Service Line Replacement Plan (LSLRP) Implementation Assistance Program helps small PWS (<10,000) meet Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) regulatory requirements early. Through this program, MassDEP DWP has contracted with a qualified consulting firm to provide small systems with up to **$50,000** in assistance with:

1. Lead Service Line and/or Galvanized Requiring Replacement service line replacements
2. Unknown service line verification through potholing excavations, statistical analysis, or other approved methods
3. Non-lead service line validation through potholing excavations and visual inspection
4. Community outreach and engagement

Eligibility

This program is available to small PWS located in disadvantaged communities that have at least one LSL, GRR or service line of unknown material, and have submitted a LSLRP to MassDEP.

Assistance will be provided to eligible systems on a first-come-first-serve basis, as funding allows.

Apply Today!

Eligible PWS interested in receiving assistance through this LSLRP Implementation Assistance Program should complete the LSLRP Implementation Assistance Program Application Form.

For questions contact the MassDEP DWP at program.director-dwp@mass.gov, subject LSLRP Implementation Assistance Program.

3. Protect Your TNC Water System for Emergencies

Emergencies can happen with little warning, and even a small disruption can affect a public water system. For Transient Non-Community (TNC) water systems, being prepared can help protect customers, employees, and visitors while making it easier to respond when something goes wrong.

What Can Affect a TNC Water System?

Power outages, flooding, severe storms, equipment failures, loss of water pressure, and damage to a well or treatment equipment can all disrupt normal operation. Some emergencies may simply interrupt water service, while others can create the potential for contamination.

Operators should pay particular attention to unusual conditions following an emergency. Floodwater near a well, sudden changes in water pressure, damaged equipment, or changes in the appearance, taste, or odor of the water may indicate that the system needs further evaluation.

Always Have a Plan

Knowing who to contact and what steps to take ahead of time can make an emergency much easier to manage. TNC owners and operators should keep important contact information readily available, understand the basic components of their water system, and know how to safely shut down equipment or restrict access to water when necessary. It is also important to maintain current water system records so information about the system can be quickly accessed during an emergency.

Always Feel Free to Ask for Help

After a significant disruption, do not assume that restoring water service means everything has returned to normal. Depending on what occurred, additional actions such as inspecting the system, flushing, collecting water samples, or providing public notice may be necessary. Being prepared before an emergency occurs can help a TNC system respond quickly, minimize disruptions, and continue its most important responsibility: providing safe drinking water to the public. As always if you have any questions or need assistance, please contact program.director-dwp@mass.gov.

4. Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) Grant Program

New EC-SDC Needs Assessment Survey

If your PWS is small or disadvantaged and has financial needs to address an emerging contaminant (e.g. PFAS or manganese) and has not already completed a Needs Assessment Survey Form, please complete one. Please return the completed form by email to MassDEP Drinking Water Program at program.director-DWP@mass.gov, Subject: EC-SDC Needs Survey, PWS, PWS ID#.

Needs Surveys are being accepted on a rolling basis, and the MassDEP EC-SDC grant program is expecting to be awarded the last allotment of funding from EPA by the end of September. For more information on the EC-SDC grant program, please visit our website.

5. Water Smart

Water-Smart Program Update

The Water-Smart program continues offering free analysis of lead drinking water samples and technical assistance to eligible public and private schools and early education and childcare facilities (EECFs). Currently, 1,367 schools and EECFs are participating in the program and 1,191 (87%) of participating facilities are within economically disadvantaged communities. To date, 1,270 schools and EECFs have completed testing. Of facilities that have tested and received results, 841 (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.

Fall Seminar Planning

We are currently planning our Fall Water-Smart Seminar! The purpose of this seminar is to raise awareness about the Water-Smart Program and the free services available to schools and licensed childcare facilities. Like our previous seminars, we plan to host the event at a public location, such as a town library, school, or community center. At the moment, we are planning to hold the seminar in early November in Fall River.

If you are a licensed childcare provider or school in or near the Fall River area and would be interested in supporting this event, we would love to hear from you. We are also looking to partner with local organizations that work with schools or licensed childcare facilities to help promote the seminar.

If you know of an organization that may be interested in partnering with the Water-Smart Program, please feel free to share our information or put us in contact at program.director-dwp@mass.gov.

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

MassDEP continues inviting all Community PWS to the *Water-Smart Pilot Program for PWS* – a forward-thinking initiative designed to help water systems stay ahead of upcoming federal regulations.

Participating in the Pilot Program allows PWS to get ahead on their November 1, 2027, LCRI Testing Offering Requirements by leveraging the pre-existing Water-Smart Program. The Pilot Program:

- Offers valuable free lead testing to schools and childcare centers now,
- Fulfills 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."**

6. 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.

What are some best practices water supplies can employ to protect their systems from cyber criminals?

A. Teach employees about how to avoid phishing scams
B. Require strong passwords
C. Use Multifactor Authentication (MFA)
D. All of the above

Should you can drink the water that collects in a dehumidifier?

A. True
B. False

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.

7. Training Calendar

When you need training, please look at the MassDEP Training Calendar for Public Water System Operators or refer to the resources on the webpage Drinking Water Training.

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

Culture, Community, and Compliance in a Changing Landscape

Wednesday, August 26; 1:00 – 2:30 pm ET; webinar

This webinar will explore innovative approaches to continuing the valuable work of improving workplace culture and community outreach while navigating a changing landscape and avoiding legal pitfalls, as well as threats to critical federal and state funding. FREE-member, $25-nonmember. Register for the webinar: Culture, Community, and Compliance in a Changing Landscape

MWRA 2026 Annual Trifecta

Wednesday, September 9; 7:30 am – 3:00 pm ET; Northfield, MA

We will gather once again at the Northfield Mountain Recreation Area for a full slate of classes led by knowledgeable industry speakers from throughout our region and around the country! You are cordially invited to register and join us for a full day of Training, Tasting, and Tomfoolery in a laid-back environment! The Annual Trifecta features a wide variety of class topics presented in multiple concurrent sessions, where operators may earn up to 5.0 TCHs for a full day of training. We think you will really enjoy our carefully selected classes, whether you attend our operational, regulatory updates, or financial/funding classes. Peruse the schedule here. Register for the webinar: MWRA 2026 Annual Trifecta

8. Cybersecurity, Emergency Preparedness, and You!

For information and alerts see Cybersecurity Resource Hub for MA Public Water Systems (PWS)

Biweekly Spotlight

Ongoing Targeting of Critical PLCs! The Current Threat Landscape: Attackers Take Advantage of Exposed PLCs.

Threat actors continue to target easily accessible Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) devices, and unfortunately, they have had recent success. If PLCs exposed to the public internet, attackers can take advantage of exploitable weaknesses, including misconfigurations, unpatched vulnerabilities and outdated devices.

Recent Examples/Alerts:

- Defending Against an Active Threat to Siemens S7 Series PLCs | CISA (August 19, 2026)
- Malicious Cyber Actors Targeting Water and Wastewater Sector Internet- Facing Programmable Logic Controllers, Causing Operational Disruptions — FBI (July 30, 2026)

Speak with your integrator and ask them how they are assuring your critical sensors and controls are not exposed.

- ✓ Do you have remote sites using cellular? How are those secured?
- ✓ Has your vendor checked to see if your utility shows up on tools (such as Shodan or Censys)?
- ✓ Do they regularly review settings, configurations and log changes?
- For additional peace of mind: You may sign up for CISA's No-Cost Cyber Vulnerability Scanning for Water Utilities | CISA for water systems. This can reduce the risk of a cyberattack at your utility by externally scanning your networks for vulnerabilities caused by publicly facing devices.
- Understand that while every device has the potential to be exploited, keeping it off the public internet and behind layers of security can prevent those exploits from taking place.

Immediate Actions:

1. Make sure the PLC or HMI has a long random password
2. If the PLC has a RUN / REMOTE option, keep it in the RUN position using the physical switch or the LCD keypad

Near Term Actions:

3. Consider moving your cellular modem service to a telecommunication vendor's private cellular network
4. Use a firewall, VPN or other approach to isolate your SCADA devices from the Internet

All Water and Wastewater Systems Near Term Actions

5. Make sure your inventory of OT and IT devices and software is current
6. Make a sketch of how the devices and software communicate with each other and where they interact with remote access and the outside world
7. Document how you would manually run your system if you lost both your PLCs and SCADA HMI

9. Supply Chain Reminders

If your PWS experiences any supply chain issues, including the receipt of a Force Majeure letter from a chemical supplier, the MassDEP/DWP encourages you to report all supply chain issues to your MassDEP regional office Drinking Water Program contact and take the following steps:

- Review your PWS Emergency Response Plans (ERP) required by 310 CMR 22.04(13) and take planned actions identified for such an emergency. This should include any applicable work and conservation practices to extend the currently available supply.
- 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.
- Check/Use 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.
- Join MaWARN.

10. How to Subscribe to the In the Main Newsletter

Subscribe to the *In The Main* Newsletter here!

For infoMassDEP 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*, subscribe by completing the quick ITM Newsletter Sign-Up Form. 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.

11. *Drinking Water Trivia!* Answer

Answers:

Question 1: D, All of the above

Phishing scams can have malicious attachments that can steal sensitive information. People should learn to recognize suspicious activity.

Strong passwords should have multiple characters that use caps, symbols and numbers besides letters.

MFA are 2 factor authentication that adds an extra layer of security that verifies when your accounts are being accessed

Question 2: B, False

Water that collects in a dehumidifier can contain bacteria, metals and chemicals