



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

In the Main Newsletter – 10/06/2026

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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.



Mohawk Trail and Todd Mountain, Charlemont, photo by [ToddC4176](#)

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1. Important Information for Operators Regarding License Application Payment Process

This summer, the Division of Occupational Licensure (DOL), the agency that houses the Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Supply Facilities (the Board), moved its license application and renewal platform to eLIPSE. As part of the transition to eLIPSE, the fee for applying for a license is now split into two different payments – the **application fee** and the **license fee**. Previously, the application fee and license fee were included in one transaction. However, the eLIPSE platform now requires operators to pay the application fee when the operator submits their application and then the license fee after the application has been approved. **The total cost of a license has not changed; the only change is that the payment is now in two parts.**

Please reach out to the Board at DrinkingWaterBoard@mass.gov if you have any questions about this process.

2. Applications Open for Grants Related to Water Resiliency

M36 Water Audit Opportunity

Water Management Act (WMA) registrants and permit holders may receive a free American Water Works Association (AWWA) M36 “Top-Down” Audit from a private consulting firm. The M36 is now accepting applications from eligible public water suppliers to receive a water audit. To apply, please review the Request for Information and complete the included application.

Responses to the Request for Interest are due on **October 21, 2026**.

Find more information and the application at [M36 Water Audit Opportunity](#).

EEA Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency Grant Program

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is pleased to announce the third year of the **Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency Grant Program**.

Application Deadline: November 12, 2026 by 11:59pm

Purpose: As droughts become more frequent due to climate change, water users across the Commonwealth need to find ways to reduce water usage and improve drought preparedness. This program will fund projects that help communities and public water suppliers reduce indoor and outdoor water use, enhance water loss control programs, and improve drought management/planning.

Eligible Project Types Include (but are not limited to):

- Water loss control program development and implementation
- Water conservation/efficiency program development
- Outdoor water use efficiency improvements
- Drought management planning and local drought plan development

Eligible Applicants:

- Municipalities
- Public water suppliers
- Non-profit organizations
- Public schools/colleges/universities
- Regional planning agencies

Award Amounts: Up to \$50,000 per project

Detailed information, including application instructions and deadlines, is posted on **COMMBUYS**. More information can be found at the webpage [Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency Grant Program](#).

Questions can be directed to Purvi Patel at purvi.patel@mass.gov or Jason Duff at Jason.duff@mass.gov

3. Storm Preparedness Reminder Following Fall Nor'easter

From September 25 through September 27, parts of Massachusetts and the rest of the Northeast coast were hit with heavy rains and winds as part of a rare fall nor'easter. Strong storms like this can cause flooding, power outages, and damage to critical infrastructure. MassDEP/DWP reminds public water systems of the resources available to reference for storm preparedness and emergency response, tips for preparing for emergency events, and the procedures for contacting MassDEP during and after a severe storm event.

Tips for Preparing for Emergencies

- Exercise Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) regularly to train staff on emergency procedures.
- Ensure personnel are aware of their roles during emergencies and have adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment as needed.
- Fill or top-off all water storage.
- Prepare emergency vehicles, including topping off fuel tanks and ensuring vehicles and other equipment are accessible and in working order.
- Ensure that water treatment facilities have adequate chemical volumes for all chemicals.
- Ensure all communication equipment is in working order.

Resources

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

- [MassDEP Storm Preparedness & Emergency Response Resources – Water Supply](#)

- [EPA Incident Action Checklist – Hurricane](#)
- [EPA Incident Action Checklist – Power Outages](#)
- [EPA Incident Action Checklist – Flooding](#)
- [MassDEP Public Drinking Water System Operations – Emergency Response & Public Notification](#)
- [MassDEP Emergency Response for Public Water Systems](#)
- [MassDEP Preparing for Extreme Weather Events and Response Guidance](#)
- [MassDEP Guidelines for Public Water Systems – Appendix O – Handbook for Water Supply Emergencies](#)
- [MA WARN](#)

Communication with MassDEP

During or after a storm event, 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 storm 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 MassDEP Regional Office.
- Outside of working hours, on weekends, and on holidays, contact the MassDEP 24-hour Emergency Response hotline at 1-888-304-1133, followed by your MassDEP Regional Office.

Following a storm 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.

4. AWIA Round 2 – 3-Month Reminder Letter Sent to PWS

The final deadline for AWIA Round 2 Compliance is at the end of the calendar year – just over three months away! Thank you to the Community PWS that have complied with AWIA’s RRA and ERP certifications thus far.

Community PWS serving a population between 3,301 and 49,999 are required to certify to EPA updates to their Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) by **December 31, 2026**. These Community PWS are also required to submit an updated ERP Compliance Checklist to MassDEP/DWP.

On September 29, 2026, MassDEP/DWP sent a letter to Community PWS serving between 3,300 and 49,999 to provide a 3-month reminder about the upcoming ERP certification deadline. Review the letter here: [Reminder for Emergency Response – Emergency Response Plan \(ERP\) Certification – 3-Month Notice for Community PWS Serving a Population Between 3,300 and 49,999](#)

Please reach out to the Drinking Water Program if you have any questions or would like to be connected to resources to help you update your ERP.

5. It's That Time Again: Seasonal Shutdown for TNC's

As autumn approaches, many Transient Non-Community (TNC) Public Water Systems—like seasonal campgrounds, recreation facilities, and roadside stands—prepare for winter shutdown. Performing a structured and thorough shutdown can prevent costly damage, protect water quality, and make for a smooth startup next spring.

Why Proper Shutdown Matters

The freeze-thaw cycle can wreak havoc on unprotected water infrastructure. Without proper draining and sealing, tanks can crack, pipes can burst, and contaminants can enter the system. Taking time to follow shutdown best practices helps:

- Preserve system integrity
- Protect water quality
- Streamline spring start-up
- Ensure compliance with monitoring schedules

Mass DEP's Updated Shutdown Guidance

MassDEP has developed a detailed, two-page guide with practical steps and best practices for shutting down your water system.

Download the full Seasonal Shutdown Guidance document here:

[Seasonal Shutdown Guidance \(PDF\)](#)

This resource walks you through:

- Pre-shutdown inspection and leak detection
- System depressurization and treatment system shutdown
- Safe draining of plumbing, tanks, and appliances
- Valve maintenance and contamination prevention
- Antifreeze use for traps and toilets (and what not to use!)

Top Tips for a Smooth Shutdown

1. Inspect everything – Source to tap, check for leaks or winter vulnerabilities.
2. Power down – Shut off all pumps and treatment systems according to manufacturer instructions.
3. Drain carefully – Empty tanks, pipes, and appliances that could freeze.
4. Seal the system – Close valves and cap open lines to keep animals and contaminants out.
5. Plan for next season – Dispose of expired treatment chemicals and note any system needs for spring.

A proactive shutdown now saves time, money, and stress later.

Questions? Contact MassDEP Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov or visit: [Manage Your TNC Drinking Water System](#) for more information about managing your TNC!

6. Upcoming MassDEP and UMass Amherst Webinars

MassDEP, in partnership with UMass Amherst, is providing several free webinars for public water system operators and personnel. Upcoming webinars include the following:

- Supply Chain Chemical Cooperatives (Eastern MA Chemical Cooperative)
- 1/2-Day Water Operations Overview for VSS/D1/T1 Certified Drinking Water Operators

To learn more about each webinar and register, see the “Training Calendar” section of this newsletter.

7. 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, 1,407 schools and EECFs are participating in the program and 1,221 (87%) of participating facilities are within economically disadvantaged communities. To date, 1,282 schools and EECFs have completed testing. Of facilities that have tested and received results, 852 (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. We are currently 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.

Play, Learn, Grow Early Childhood Conference Recap

On Saturday, October 3rd Water-Smart Outreach Coordinator, Eduardo Ceballos-Corro attended the first annual Play, Learn, Grow Early Childhood Conference at B.M.C. Durfee High School in Fall River, hosted by EZ Ed 2 Go.

The conference brought together educators and early childcare providers for professional development, hands on learning sessions and networking with various vendors. Eduardo Ceballos-Corro was able to

connect with several educators and childcare providers many of whom were already familiar with the Water-Smart Program and had received previous outreach emails.

Attending the event provided an opportunity to answer questions, clarify program information, and distribute materials to educators interested in sharing Water-Smart resources with their schools and childcare facilities. Overall, this was a valuable opportunity to increase program awareness in the Fall River area.

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."

8. 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.

How can nor'easters have an impact on drinking water quality?

- A. Sewage overflow
- B. Saltwater intrusion
- C. Power failure
- D. All of the above

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.

9. 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

MassDEP/UMass Webinar: 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 \(Eastern MA Chemical Cooperative\)](#)

MassDEP/UMass Webinar: 1/2-Day Water Operations Overview for VSS/D1/T1 Certified Drinking Water Operators

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 is a starting point to help operators pass the VSS, D1, and T1 certification exams; operators who want additional exam preparation may want to consider signing up for a full VSS/T1/D1 training. Participants can receive 3 TCHs for successful completion of the webinar. [Register for the webinar: 1/2-Day Water Operations Overview for VSS/D1/T1 Certified Drinking Water Operators](#)

EFCN Webinar: Rate Setting and Affordability Assessment for Small Systems

Tuesday, October 13, 2026; 12:00 – 1:00 pm ET; webinar

Small water systems face the challenge of maintaining financial sustainability while providing safe, reliable service at affordable rates. This webinar will introduce the fundamentals of rate setting, including common rate structures. Participants will learn how to assess whether current or projected rates are sufficient to meet system needs and evaluate rate affordability for customers. The session will also demonstrate tools for rate analysis and affordability assessment and highlight resources available to support small systems. [Register for the webinar: Rate Setting and Affordability Assessment for Small Systems](#)

EPA Webinar: Natural Hazard Technical Assistance for Updating your Emergency Response Plan

Wednesday, October 14, 2026; 1:00 – 2:30 pm ET; webinar

Join EPA's Strengthening Water Infrastructure for Tomorrow (SWIFT) initiative for a free webinar on updating your emergency response plan (ERP) for natural hazards. The webinar will highlight how to use available data resources, online tools, templates, and free technical assistance to address natural hazard threats in ERPs. Section 1433 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), revised by America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) section 2013, requires community water systems (CWS) serving over 3,300 people to prepare (or revise) and certify ERPs to the EPA every five years. Recertification deadlines have been occurring throughout 2025 and 2026. The final ERP recertification deadline, for systems serving 3,301 to 49,999 people, is December 31, 2026. CWSs that serve less than 3,301 people, non-CWSs, wastewater utilities, and stormwater utilities are not required to certify completion of an ERP to EPA. However, because natural disasters and malevolent acts also affect these utilities, EPA encourages them to develop ERPs to plan for potential disruptions. [Register for the webinar: Natural Hazard Technical Assistance for Updating your Emergency Response Plan](#)

EPA Tools & Resources Webinar: Partnering to Address Lead (Pb)

Wednesday, October 21, 2026; 1:00 – 2:30 pm ET; webinar

EPA works with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on projects to protect public health from environmental threats and hazards and strengthen environmental health systems across the country. EPA and our state partners work collaboratively in tackling priority environmental challenges facing the nation, including lead (Pb). Over the past year, ASTHO and ECOS hosted regional calls with state environmental and health agencies to discuss cross-agency lead coordination. This webinar will provide an overview of what was heard at the listening sessions – including overarching themes, state program highlights, and call outcomes – as well as plans to build upon this work in the coming year. [Register for the webinar: Partnering to Address Lead \(Pb\)](#)

EPA Webinar: Emergency Drinking Water Supply Planning

Tuesday November 17th, 2026 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT; Webinar

Under SDWA section 1433, ERPs must address the supply of drinking water provided to communities and individuals, including planning alternative water supplies in the event of a disruption. In this webinar, EPA will cover the basics of planning for an Emergency Drinking Water Supply to include in your ERP. [Register for the webinar: Emergency Drinking Water Supply Planning](#)

EPA Webinar: Water Sector Utility Case Studies for Building Resilience to Natural Hazards

Wednesday December 9th, 2026 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT; Webinar

EPA's Strengthening Water Infrastructure for Tomorrow (SWIFT) technical assistance is tailored to meet the needs of each utility request, from building risk and resilience assessments, to updating emergency response plans, to quantifying the potential reductions in risk that specific resilience projects can deliver. Learn how water sector utilities are benefitting from SWIFT technical assistance. Hear directly from utility representatives across the country that have engaged in the process to build system resilience to various natural hazards. [Register for the webinar: Water Sector Utility Case Studies for Building Resilience to Natural Hazards](#)

EPA Webinar: Building Winter Weather Resilience for Water Sector Utilities

Wednesday January 13th, 2027 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT; Webinar

Ready for the winter season? EPA's Strengthening Water Infrastructure for Tomorrow (SWIFT) experts can provide customized technical assistance to help your utility build resilience to winter weather hazards through risk-informed project planning and investment. Review this winter's seasonal outlook, learn about the SWIFT technical assistance experience, and explore tools that can help your utility better understand and assess system impacts and identify resilient solutions. [Register for the webinar: Building Winter Weather Resilience for Water Sector Utilities](#)

10. Cybersecurity, Emergency Preparedness, and You!

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



Biweekly Spotlight

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month: Actions for PWS to Strengthen Cybersecurity

MassDEP/DWP October Focus: Throughout October, MassDEP/DEP will remind all to focus on simple yet powerful actions that all PWS can take to strengthen their cybersecurity posture:

- **Conduct Cybersecurity Assessments for Your PWS:** Periodically assess systems to identify and address vulnerabilities. Register for Free EPA cyber assessment: [EPA Cybersecurity Evaluation Program](#).
- **Train Staff:** Provide regular cybersecurity training to employees so they can recognize and respond to threats. Free resource with 1TCH: [MassDEP DWP Self-Paced Course on Basic Cybersecurity Measures for Water and Wastewater Systems in Massachusetts \(1 TCH\)](#). Enroll Free: [Cybersecurity Self-Paced Course 1 TCH](#). [EPA Free Cyber Trainings:](#) Throughout October, EPA will be offering a series of trainings designed to help drinking water and wastewater systems strengthen their cyber resilience with courses including both beginner and intermediate level sessions. Register for [EPA Cybersecurity Trainings](#).
- **Think Before You Click, Recognize, and Report Phishing:** If a link looks a little off, think before you click. It could be an attempt to get sensitive information or install malware. Check MassDEP DWP Poster with [Tips on How to Recognize and Report Phishing](#).
- **Use Strong Passwords:** Make sure it's long – at least 15 random characters, and avoid using common or easily guessable passwords, such as simple keyboard patterns or slightly modified words, when creating your passwords. Don't share your password with anyone or use the same or similar password for multiple accounts: Check [MassDEP DWP Poster with Tips on Passwords](#).
- **Enable Multi-Factor Authentication:** You need more than a password to protect your online accounts, and enabling MFA makes you significantly less likely to get hacked.
- **Develop an Incident Response Plan:** Establish and test protocols for responding to cybersecurity incidents: [MassDEP/DWP PWS Cyber incident plan Template](#)
- **Review [Secure connectivity principles for Operational Technology \(OT\)](#)** and make sure your team is putting best practices into place.
- **Apply Today- MassDEP DWP Public Water Suppliers Cybersecurity Improvements Grant Program.** The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund in partnership with the 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. Apply Here: [Public Water Suppliers Cybersecurity Improvements Grant Program | Mass.gov](#).

- Visit the [MassDEP Cyber Resource Hub](#) for additional alerts, tools, and guidance.

11. 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](#).

12. How To Subscribe to the In The Main Newsletter

[Subscribe to the *In The Main* Newsletter here!](#)

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*, 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](#).

13. Drinking Water Trivia! Answer

Answer: D. All of the Above

Heavy rain and flooding can cause raw sewage from wastewater treatment plants to spill into freshwater supplies.

Coastal storms can push ocean water inland and into freshwater supplies

Power outages can interrupt water treatment plant operations.