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

In the Main Newsletter – 10/20/2026

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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.



Hockomock Swamp, which translates to "place where the spirits dwell," photo by MassWildlife

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1. Applications Due Tomorrow for WMA 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 **TOMORROW, October 21, 2026**.

Find more information and the application at M36 Water Audit Opportunity.

2. EEA Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency Grant Program Application Window Still Open

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

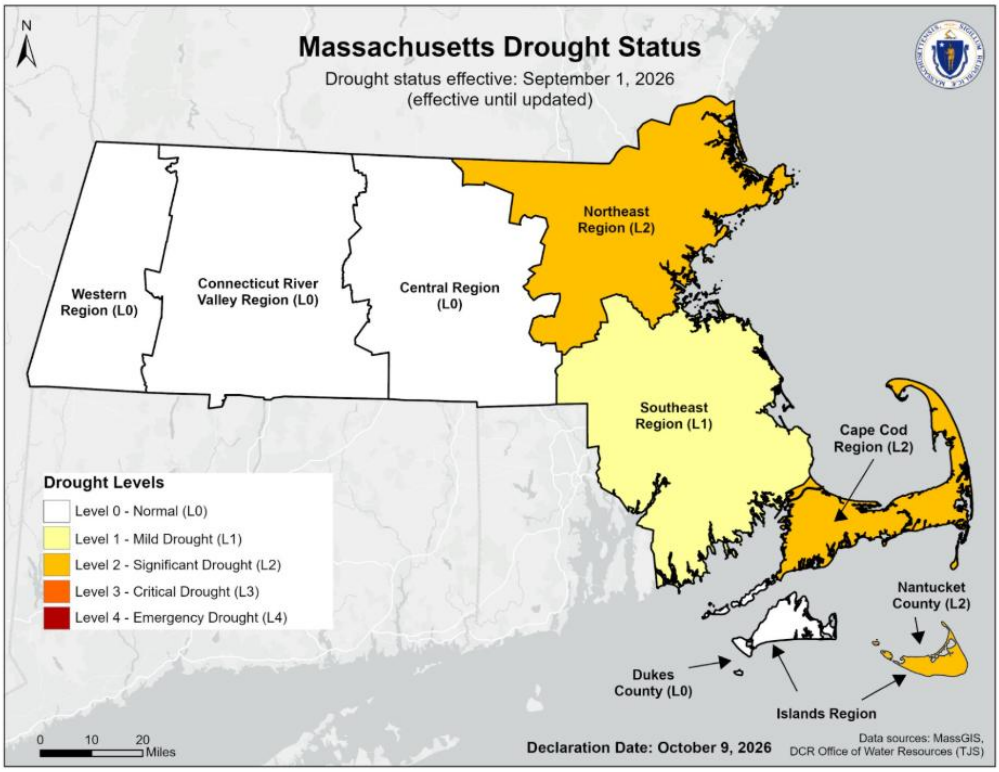
Award Amounts: Up to $50,000 per project

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. Drought Conditions Improve in Connecticut River Valley Region

On Friday, October 9, 2026, the Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) office declared that drought conditions in the Connecticut River Valley Region have returned to normal conditions. However, the Northeast Regions has increased to a Level 2 – Significant Drought. All other regions have remained at the same drought levels identified in September 2026. The most recent drought declaration can be read on the Massachusetts Drought Status webpage.



Drought declarations require detailed monitoring of drought conditions; continued coordination among state and federal agencies to advance the implementation of water use restrictions; and engagement with municipalities, including local Boards of Health, to provide technical outreach and assistance to water suppliers and affected municipalities.

Below is a list of resources for communities to use related to drought outreach and education, water conservation, and drought status monitoring.

- The Massachusetts Drought Dashboard provides regularly updated maps monitoring drought conditions across the state.
- The Drought Alert Flyer provides information about current drought conditions and how communities across the state can help promote water conservation, fire prevention, and drought preparedness.

- The Drought Management in Massachusetts webpage includes several recommendations for residents, businesses, and communities during each level of drought (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4) related to water conservation and fire prevention.
- The Water Resources Toolkit offers many examples of outreach materials for communities to use related to droughts.
- Utilities are encouraged to develop a Drought Management Plan to identify preparedness, monitoring, response, and outreach procedures related to droughts.
- Information for private well owners can be found at the webpage Information for Private Well Owners During a Drought
- Previous issues of In the Main include additional resources related to drought preparedness and response resources.
- MassDEP Drinking Water Program created a flyer about Water Distribution System Flushing During Droughts that water systems can share with their residents.

4. EC-SDC Program Update

Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Grant Program

The MassDEP EC-SDC Program has been recently awarded $18,607,000 through the FFY26 EC-SDC allocations from EPA. Massachusetts has been awarded a total of $95,614,000 between the four grant periods (FFY22/23, FFY24, FFY25, and FFY26). If your PWS is small or disadvantaged and has financial needs to address an emerging contaminant, such as PFAS or manganese, and has not already completed a Needs Assessment Survey Form, please complete one and return it to MassDEP Drinking Water Program at Program.Director-DWP@mass.gov, Subject: EC-SDC Needs Survey Form, PWS ID#. Please note, MassDEP DWP is accepting surveys on a rolling basis.

Visit the MassDEP Drinking Water Program's Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Grant page for more information about the grant program and for a map of grantees. To date, 76 total grants to PWS have been awarded about $55.4 million in EC-SDC funding (Western Region: 13, Central Region: 26, Northeast Region: 12, Southeast Region: 25).

5. Beyond the Basics: Protecting Your TNC Water System During Seasonal Shutdown

As seasonal Transient Non-Community (TNC) Public Water Systems prepare to close for the winter, proper shutdown procedures remain an important part of protecting drinking water quality and infrastructure. While draining pipes and turning off equipment are essential first steps, operators should also consider less obvious areas where damage or contamination can occur during extended periods of inactivity.

Don't Overlook these Common Shutdown Concerns

Even after a water system has been drained, certain components may remain vulnerable to freezing temperatures, moisture, and contamination. Before closing for the season, operators should pay particular attention to:

- **Wellheads and Vents:** Inspect protective caps, vents, and seals to help prevent insects, rodents, and surface water from entering the system.
- **Storage Tanks and Exposed Piping:** Confirm that water has been properly drained from areas susceptible to freezing and that openings are securely protected.
- **Water meters and equipment:** Remove or protect components vulnerable to freezing according to manufacturer instructions.
- **Treatment equipment:** Follow manufacturer-recommended shutdown procedures for filters, pumps, chemical feed systems, and other treatment components.
- **Plumbing connections:** Ensure disconnected lines are capped or otherwise protected against contamination.

Protecting Water Quality While Closed

Seasonal shutdowns are not just about preventing frozen pipes. When a water system is depressurized, it can become more vulnerable to contamination if openings are left exposed or system components are not properly secured.

MassDEP encourages seasonal water systems to leave distribution piping and other components in sanitary condition during shutdown. Maintaining protective barriers and addressing potential contamination pathways before closing can help reduce water quality concerns when the system returns to operation.

A Final Reminder Before Closing

Before leaving your facility for the season, confirm that all required routine drinking water monitoring has been completed and applicable paperwork submitted to MassDEP. Record important shutdown information, including the date, meter readings, and any repairs or maintenance needs identified during inspection.

Following a consistent shutdown procedure and maintaining records of completed activities are recommended best practices. Taking a little extra time to protect your water system now can help prevent costly repairs, reduce contamination risks, and protect drinking water quality.

For additional recommendations, review MassDEP's Seasonal System Shutdown Guidance (PDF).

Questions? Contact the MassDEP Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov or visit MassDEP's Public Drinking Water System Operations webpage for additional resources.

6. Lead and Copper 90th Percentile Update

It is that time again!

MassDEP DWP routinely posts 90th percentile results for the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) on our web page. This posting occurs 3 times per year after each round of LCR monitoring (March 31, September 30 and December 31). Please see the latest update at Results of lead sampling for Public Water Systems | Mass.gov. PWS should note that this latest posting includes a total of 9 PWS which exceeded the current Lead Action Level (AL) of 15 parts per billion (ppb).

Getting Ready for the LCRI

Under the upcoming Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), the lead action level will be reduced to 10 parts per billion (ppb). Based on the most recent 90th percentile sampling results noted above, approximately 8 PWS are expected to exceed this new threshold (exceeding 10 ppb, but not exceeding 15 ppb). Please see the latest update at Results of lead sampling for Public Water Systems | Mass.gov and if your latest 90th percentile result is above 10 ppb but below the current LCR lead action level of 15 ppb, now is a good time to begin preparing. Contact the Drinking Water Program at program.directordwp@mass.gov, subject: LCRI, to be connected with one of our technical assistance providers for support.

7. LCR, LCRR, and LCRI Updates

PWS Starting Non-Lead Validations Before November 2027 Must Reach out To MassDEP DWP to Confirm Your Validation Process is LCRI Compliant!

Has your PWS began your Non-Lead Validations, which are a LCRI requirement, prior to November 1st, 2027? If your PWS has begun Non-Lead Validations, **PWS MUST reach out to MassDEP DWP NOW with your validation plan**, to make sure that your validation process is as stringent as the LCRI requirements, and to ensure that your PWS will be eligible for the Non-Lead Validation waiver when that is applicable.

Whether your PWS is planning to complete Non-Lead Validations by November 1, 2027, or is starting them now to have more time to complete validations under the LCRI rather than the standard 7 years, PWS must discuss your validation process with MassDEP. PWS in either scenario must submit a Non-Lead Validation Waiver Request prior to November 1, 2027, to ensure that your validations conducted prior to November 2027 will count towards your LCRI required Non-Lead Validations.

Please reach out to MassDEP DWP at program.director-dwp@mass.gov, subject: [Your PWS ID#]-LCRI Non-Lead Validations.

When reviewing a PWS's validation process/plan, MassDEP reviews the following information:

- Your non-lead validation pool,
- Which service lines were excluded from the non-lead validation pool,
- The number of service lines included in the random subset of service lines from the validation pool for 2-point visual inspections (the inspection group),
- The planned validation deadline/completion date,
- how the 2-point visual inspections will be completed,
- the SLI used to create the validation pool, and
- any additional information that you believe is relevant to this process.

8. Water Smart

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, 1,416 schools and EECFs are participating in the program and 1,234 (87%) of participating facilities are within economically disadvantaged communities. To date, 1,291 schools and EECFs have

completed testing. Of facilities that have tested and received results, 856 (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.

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."**

9. 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.

Under the federal Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), what percentage of eligible schools and childcares served by a community water system (CWS), must

generally be sampled each year during the initial five-year testing cycle, among those that accept the offer to be sampled?

A. 10%
B. 15%
C. 20%
D. 25%

Can Community Water Systems (CWS) count elementary schools and/or licensed childcare facilities that decline sampling or do not respond to outreach toward the annual 20% sampling requirement, provided the CWS has made at least two separate outreach attempts to the facility?

A. Yes
B. No

Check out the other articles and links 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.

10. 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

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)

PFAS Update: Litigation, Regulation, and What's Next

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. EDT; Webinar

This interactive dialogue with leaders from the legal and water utility sectors will take a close look at the current litigation and regulatory landscape of PFAS and how water utilities and the sector are navigating it. Discussion will focus on the 3M, DuPont, BASF, and Tyco settlements and their impact on water utility liabilities and future operations. AWWA's outside counsel will provide an update on the litigation challenging MCLs, and a recap on oral arguments in the case that will take place on September 18th. The impact of current and evolving CERCLA (Superfund) and RCRA federal laws surrounding PFAS will be discussed, focusing on RCRA's requirements regarding the generation, transport, and disposal of active PFAS waste. CERCLA's retroactive requirements of managing the cleanup of PFAS contamination will also be discussed. $75-member, $120-nonmember. Register for the webinar: PFAS Update: Litigation, Regulation, and What's Next

UMass Amherst FREE Online VSS, D1, T1 (1/2 Day) Certified Drinking Water Operator Training

Thursday, October 29, 2026 8:30 p.m. EDT; Webinar

Join us, or invite others to participate, in this FREE virtual introductory training 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. Register for the webinar: UMass Amherst FREE Online VSS, D1, T1 (1/2 Day) Certified Drinking Water Operator Training

EFCN Webinar: Basic Water Hydraulics – Concepts and Calculations for Drinking Water Operators

Tuesday, November 10th, 2026 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT; Webinar

Understanding basic hydraulic principles is essential for the effective operation and maintenance of drinking water systems. This one-hour webinar introduces operators to the fundamental concepts of water hydraulics and demonstrates how these principles affect water movement through treatment facilities, storage systems, transmission mains, and distribution systems. Participants will learn key hydraulic terms, explore the relationships between flow, pressure, velocity, and head, and review common calculations used in daily operations. Through practical examples and operator-focused exercises, attendees will gain a better understanding of how hydraulic conditions impact system performance, water quality, and regulatory compliance. Register for the webinar: Basic Water Hydraulics – Concepts and Calculations for Drinking Water Operators

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

11. Cybersecurity, Emergency Preparedness, and You!

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



Biweekly Spotlight

YOU KNOW YOU NEED A CYBERSECURITY ASSESSMENT, DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN GET IT DONE AT NO COST?

Cyber hygiene is an important part of PWS daily operations. The cybersecurity component of the sanitary survey process requires PWS to complete a cybersecurity assessment, which focuses on identifying cybersecurity risks within PWS SCADA and I.T. networks. MassDEP DWP reviews these cyber assessment reports during PWS sanitary surveys or routine inspections.

While some PWS choose to work with their trusted integrators or private firms, we want to highlight that this is something you can have done for free. There is no need to pay a private company to perform an assessment. If you choose to work with a private company, that is entirely up to you. Ultimately, most of these assessments ask similar questions related to your OT (Operational Technology) & I.T. Networks. If you do go with a private company to carry out an assessment, make sure to ask what tool / standard they are using and confirm with the MassDEP DWP Cyber team that it will meet the requirements beforehand. Assessment answers should be explained in detail and not left blank or ambiguous.

MassDEP DWP is happy to help you access the available free resources and will let you know when an assessment is needed. Cyber hygiene is considered part of daily operations.

CURRENTLY, THE MOST POPULAR FREE AVENUES TO GET THIS DONE ARE:

1. **EPA No-Cost Cybersecurity Assessment Service**

    - EPA conducts no-cost cyber assessments for drinking water and wastewater utilities using EPA's Cybersecurity Water Cybersecurity Assessment Tool (WCAT) derived from CISA's Cyber Performance Goals (CPGs). The confidential assessment is performed by an EPA contractor, and the results are not shared with the EPA. Utilities receive a cybersecurity assessment report and a risk mitigation plan to help prioritize cybersecurity efforts. This will highlight potential gaps in PWS OT/SCADA and IT networks and allow PWS to take proper proactive action. The EPA also offers the WCAT tool, they use for cybersecurity assessments, which is available for free download from the EPA website. If you do go with your own vendor to perform a self-assessment, the WCAT is the easiest for MassDEP DWP to review with you.

2. **CISA No-Cost In-person Cybersecurity Performance Goals Assessment**

    - A great opportunity is available for Massachusetts PWS to receive a free cyber assessment provided by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). The CISA in-person assessment will be conducted using the Cross-Sector Cybersecurity Performance Goals (CPGs), which are essentially the same as the EPA's question set. However, with the utility's approval, the assessment can include participation by MassDEP DWP cybersecurity staff and MA National Guard cybersecurity staff. This diverse collection of subject matter experts enriches the conversation and the value to the PWS. Again, the assessment is confidential and only the PWS receives the assessment report. If your PWS is interested in participating in this opportunity, contact the Drinking Water Program at program.director-dwp@mass.gov: Subject: CISA Cybersecurity Assessment.

3. **Self-assessment**

    - While we strongly urge PWS to use one of the two options above, a self-assessment can be done if you have expertise in-house to complete one. The easiest and most common tool for this is the USEPA's WCAT found here.

Once you receive your cybersecurity assessment report, please do not send it to us. We consider the report sensitive. We will schedule an in person or a MS Teams call to virtually review your assessment securely. Please email program.director-dwp@mass.gov and let us know you are ready to schedule a cybersecurity assessment report review. Let us know if you prefer an in-person or virtual meeting.

Grants and Fundings:

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

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. Drinking Water Trivia! Answer

Answers:

Question 1. C. 20%

Under the federal Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), community water systems (CWS) must generally collect lead samples from at least 20% of the total eligible elementary schools and childcare facilities they serve each year during the first five-years following the November 1, 2027, compliance date. Sampling continues until all eligible facilities have been sampled once, declined to participate or have been determined to be non-responsive. Please note that secondary schools must be sampled upon request.

Question 2. A. True

Under the LCRI, community water systems (CWS) may count elementary schools and licensed childcare facilities that decline sampling or are non-responsive toward the annual 20% requirement. A facility may be considered non-responsive after the system makes at least two separate outreach attempts to schedule sampling and receives no response to either attempt. CWS must document refusals and non-responses and report the relevant outreach information to the state as part of their annual reporting requirements.