
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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FAQs on Water and Wastewater Mutual Aid and Assistance

The recovery of utilities from disasters, man-made or natural, is extraordinarily important to the health and safety of the communities they serve. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services urges water and wastewater utilities to enter into mutual aid agreements and to participate in the intrastate mutual aid network by joining the NH Public Works Mutual Aid Program. Participation will assure that utilities are prepared to assist each other when emergencies or disasters strike. The following are some frequently asked questions about what mutual aid is and how it works.

What is mutual aid and assistance?

- Mutual aid and assistance is one utility helping another based on a written agreement.

What is the purpose of mutual aid and assistance?

- It establishes an agreement and protocols for sharing resources among water and wastewater utilities and public works departments statewide that are in place before disaster strikes.
- It provides a forum for establishing and maintaining emergency contacts.
- It provides access to specialized, certified, and knowledgeable utility personnel, heavy equipment, tools and supplies used by utilities.

Why is mutual aid and assistance important?

- Utility resources are specialized.
- Utilities must be self-sufficient and able to fill the gap before arrival of any governmental aid.
- Water and wastewater restoration is key to disaster response.

What are the benefits of participating in the Public Works Mutual Aid Program?

- Prompt and effective response.
- Low cost to participate (\$25/year), akin to a low cost insurance policy to access resources when needed.
- In case of a federally declared emergency, it facilitates FEMA reimbursement since reimbursement is contingent upon a pre-existing, signed mutual aid and assistance agreement.
- Increases emergency preparedness and coordination.
- Provides a single agreement to access resources statewide.
- Expedites arrival of aid. Administrative items and protocols and all the paperwork are already worked out in advance.
- Agreement contains indemnification and worker's compensation provisions to protect participating utilities.
- Provides reimbursement protocols.

- Does not require any disaster declaration to activate, which means utilities can request aid at almost any time (even for small scale events).

How does a utility use their mutual aid agreement during an emergency?

- Initial access may be made directly through other members or through a list serve and/or website.
- Members are able to match the equipment, skilled labor, and other resources that they need.

Are member utilities required to respond and send resources?

- There is no obligation to respond.
- The needs of your own community always come first.

My system is too small, so I have nothing to offer.

- Any assistance can be helpful to a utility in need.
- Small utilities may not have the equipment, but they have certified and knowledgeable personnel.

My system is too large. I will always be the one helping and no one can help me.

- Not true. It's not just about equipment but personnel too, including administrative assistance.
- When a major emergency hits hard, a large system will need all they help they can get, even if it comes from several different smaller communities.

What happens if a utility sends resources and needs them back?

- Under no circumstances is a utility to send resources if it impacts their ability to manage daily operations or response to its own emergency.
- It is up to the lending utility to determine what resources to send.
- Resources remain under the authority of the sending utility and as such can be recalled.

What happens if equipment on loan is damaged or stolen?

- The lending utility is responsible for insurance in case this happens.

How can I find out more information about the NHPWMAP?

- Additional information about the program can be found at the [UNH website](#). There you will find program information, agreement, forms, inventory lists, FEMA forms, and a list of participating communities.

Questions?

If you have any questions about mutual aid or the NHPWMAP, please contact:

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For More Information

Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov or visit our website at des.nh.gov.

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of July 2019. Statutory or regulatory changes or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.