

EPA's Support to the Water Sector Under the National Response Framework

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's National Response Framework (NRF) establishes a comprehensive, all-hazards approach to domestic incident response—from the smallest incident to the largest catastrophe. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates response support across the federal government by activating, as needed, one or more of 15 Emergency Support Function (ESF) Annexes to the NRF. EPA has developed this fact sheet to inform drinking water and wastewater utilities, and other partners and stakeholders, about the roles and functions performed by EPA for the water sector under the NRF.

How EPA's Support Responsibilities Are Organized in the NRF

EPA's support to the water sector (which includes drinking water and wastewater systems) is organized as functions in several of these ESF Annexes. In anticipation of, or in response to, declared disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act, the ESFs are a critical mechanism for coordinating federal department and agency capabilities and resources. Activities under each ESF are coordinated by a primary agency. The primary agency has the greatest authorities, roles, resources, or capabilities for a particular function within an ESF. The primary agency may direct support agencies to provide specific additional capabilities.

The table below provides an overview of the ESFs that can include an EPA role in support of the water sector. For each ESF, the table indicates EPA's function and the page reference in the ESF for this activity.

| Annex | EPA Role | EPA's Water Sector-Related Function |
|---|----------------|---|
| <p>ESF #3 – Public Works and Engineering</p> <p>Primary Agencies:</p> <p>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – response</p> <p>FEMA - recovery</p> <p><i>ESF #3 is the primary ESF for natural disasters with water sector impacts. USACE facilitates and coordinates support from federal departments and agencies providing public works and infrastructure support assistance. In support of ESF #3, EPA works closely with USACE and FEMA.</i></p> | Support Agency | Conducts infrastructure protection activities for drinking water and wastewater treatment systems in the water sector, in accordance with its responsibilities as the designated Sector-Specific Agency for this sector as described in Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7. |
| | | Assists, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services, in determining the suitability for human consumption of water from local sources and in identifying hazardous materials having the potential to affect drinking water supplies. |
| | | Assists in identifying critical water and wastewater needs, including personnel, electrical power, and treatment chemicals. |
| | | Assists, in conjunction with state/tribal primacy agencies and permitting authorities, in determining the operating status of water and wastewater systems. |
| | | Assists state solid waste agencies with assessments of staging/storage areas, solid waste facilities, and wastewater facilities; environmental sampling and monitoring; and inspections, resources, data, and other support as appropriate. |
| | | Assists in investigation and intelligence analysis for hazardous materials incidents involving contaminated water and wastewater systems, pursuant to existing EPA statutory authorities. |
| ESF #4 – Firefighting | Support Agency | Provides assistance in identifying an uncontaminated, operational water source for firefighting. |

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| <p>ESF #4 – Firefighting</p> <p>Primary Agency: Department of Agriculture/Forest Service</p> | <p>Support Agency</p> | <p>Provides assistance in identifying critical water systems requiring priority restoration for firefighting.</p> |
| | | <p>Provides technical assistance on issues concerning the impacts of firefighting chemicals on wastewater treatment facilities.</p> |
| <p>ESF #8 – Public Health and Medical Services</p> <p>Primary Agency: Department of Health and Human Services</p> | <p>Support Agency</p> | <p>Provides technical assistance and environmental information for the assessment of the public health/medical aspects of situations involving hazardous materials, including technical and policy assistance in matters involving water and wastewater systems, for critical health care facilities.</p> |
| | | <p>Assists in identifying alternate water supplies and wastewater collection and treatment for critical health care facilities.</p> |
| <p>ESF #10 – Oil and Hazardous Materials</p> <p>Primary Agency: EPA</p> | <p>Primary Agency</p> | <p>Samples drinking water supplies to determine if there has been intentional contamination.</p> |
| <p>ESF #11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources</p> <p>Primary Agencies: Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior</p> | <p>Support Agency</p> | <p>Provides technical assistance in determining when water is suitable for human consumption.</p> |
| <p>ESF #12 – Energy</p> <p>Primary Agency: Department of Energy</p> | <p>Support Agency</p> | <p>Assists in identifying critical water and wastewater systems requiring priority power restoration.</p> |
| <p>ESF #14 – Long-Term Community Recovery</p> <p>ESF Coordinator: FEMA</p> | <p>Support Agency</p> | <p>Provides technical assistance in contaminated debris management, environmental remediation, and watershed protection, planning, management, and restoration.</p> |
| | | <p>Provides technical assistance in developing appropriate drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects and in identifying financial assistance options.</p> |
| <p>Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Support</p> <p>Coordinating Agency: Department of Homeland Security</p> | <p>Support Agency</p> | <p>Serves as the Sector Specific Agency for the Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment Sector</p> |

Contact Us

For additional information on EPA's water sector support under the National Response Framework, please visit <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf>. For additional information on EPA's activities related to water security, including resources related to emergency/incident planning, please visit www.epa.gov/watersecurity.