EPA
United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Water System Owner Roles and Responsibilities:
A Best Practices Guide

Introduction	
Purpose	This Guide will help you better understand: ◆ Your roles and responsibilities in delivering safe drinking water to your system's customers. ◆ Additional responsibilities, which can vary depending on your system size, characteristics (e.g., complexity of treatment), managerial structure, and regulatory requirements. All system owners share several key responsibilities that are critical to meeting your ultimate goal - providing an adequate and safe supply of drinking water.
Target Audience	This Guide is intended for owners and operators of all public water systems serving fewer than 10,000 persons.

System Operation

Work to ensure that the system as a whole is functioning properly, efficiently, and in a financially responsible way.

General Responsibilities

◆ Annually assess your system's technical, managerial, and financial capacity:

  ◆ Ensure that your system's infrastructure (pumps, pipes, tanks, etc.) is in good working order.

  ◆ Determine whether staffing levels are adequate.

  ◆ Work with the system operator to ensure that all staff training needs are met.

  ◆ Review your system's budget annually to assess whether your system is collecting enough revenue each year to cover costs of operating and maintaining the system.

◆ Determine and plan future infrastructure maintenance and replacement needs with the system operator.

  ◆ Develop and maintain an asset management plan to inventory assets of the system.

  ◆ Develop and maintain a Cross Connection Control and Backflow Prevention Program.

◆ Discuss treatment optimization with the system operator and develop an optimization plan that includes goals for the water system to meet.

◆ Identify available sources of local, state, and federal funding with help from regulators, planning departments, and technical assistance providers.

For additional information:
Call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791, visit the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/safewater/, or contact your state drinking water representative.

Regulatory Compliance

Support your system in complying with all relevant regulations and protecting your customers' health.

General Responsibilities

- Make sure the system operator is aware of all relevant regulations, including sampling, reporting, and record keeping requirements.

- Stay informed of sample results and make sure all follow-up sampling, reporting, record keeping, and public notification requirements are met.

- Ensure the system is in compliance with existing and upcoming regulations; work with regulators as necessary.

- Communicate with state and local officials to increase your awareness of new and upcoming regulations and tools that can help promote regulatory compliance and system security (e.g., guidance material, new treatment technologies, etc.).

Communication

Maintain a positive relationship with customers, regulators, and the system operator and keep them informed of your efforts to provide high quality drinking water.
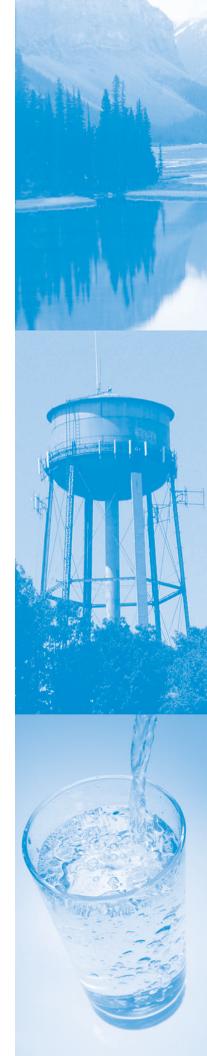
General Responsibilities

- Maintain open channels of communication with staff concerning budget issues, regulatory changes, or planned staffing changes.

- Inform customers of the need for infrastructure investments and rate changes and the resulting link to maintaining drinking water quality.

- Confirm that annual Consumer Confidence Reports are accurate and delivered on time, if applicable.

- Meet regularly with the operator for updates on routine system inspections and scheduled maintenance.

System Security

Protect your system against natural disasters and vandalism.

General Responsibilities

- Invest in any necessary security upgrades (e.g., fences around system facilities, closed-circuit television). Inspect critical facilities and components, including door locks and fencing, as part of daily inspections

- Update the Emergency Response Plan and participate in exercise drills with the system operator.

- Make sure that you and the system operator know whom to contact in case of an emergency.

- Develop procedures for handling new and terminated employees (e.g., collecting keys, changing locks and computer passwords).

- Communicate with state and local officials and your community to increase your awareness of new developments and tools.