



2018 Drought - Resiliency & Sustainable Drinking Water Sources for PWSs

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Drinking Water Bureau

Public Water System and Community Representative:

The low snowpack levels and lack of precipitation in New Mexico this year are causing increases in drought severity indicators per the [United States Drought Monitor](#). During drought conditions many areas of New Mexico experience groundwater depletion as communities depend on pumping groundwater for a primary source of drinking water. As a result of the combination of factors impacting drinking water production such as declining ground water levels, extreme drought conditions, and aging or leaking/failing infrastructure **public water systems in New Mexico should take action now to prevent water shortages or outages in the summer months of 2018.**

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Drinking Water Bureau (DWB) would like to remind public water system leaders of actions that can be taken to proactively increase resiliency for the upcoming summer season. Reliance on only one source for a public water supply significantly increases risk factors for a water shortage or outage. Similarly, not having adequate treated water storage could also impact the ability to produce and serve enough drinking water to meet the community's increase in demands during these months.

DWB offers the following recommendations on how to monitor and protect the sustainability of drinking water sources in your community.

- A. **Monitor for indicators of the system's vulnerability to water shortages. Routinely measure and record (no less than quarterly) the static and pumping water levels and the specific conductance in your production wells to track changes that may indicate a decrease in groundwater levels. Maintain production records monthly and evaluate changes in gallons per minute (gpm) produced;**

- B. **Discuss water conservation with your decision-making body and community members. Specifically consider the ability to implement mandatory and/or voluntary water conservation measures including a tiered water rate system. Utilize drought planning tools and guidance provided by the Office of the State Engineer Water Use and Conservation Bureau available at <http://www.ose.state.nm.us/WUC/index.php>;**

C. **Develop or Update an Emergency Response Plan** to prepare for potential water outages. Identify emergency sources of potable water and approved water haulers as part of the plan. Reserve emergency funding for unexpected repairs and equipment replacement. Ensure public water system staff are informed and trained on the current Emergency Response Plan. An example template is available at https://www.env.nm.gov/dwb/tools/documents/AS_EmergencyResponsePlan_Template_110215.docx.

D. **Participate in the New Mexico Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network (NMWARN)**. This organization allows water systems to join a statewide network through a private agreement between public water systems to share resources temporarily in emergency situations. Coordinate with neighboring systems to see if an interconnection or local resource sharing option is viable in an emergency. More information is available at <https://nmrwa.org/nmwarn/>.

E. **Complete a developmental planning process** such as a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) or update an existing one to determine the best way to secure backup water sources or finished water storage.

F. **Develop a Source Water Protection Plan**. Develop or update your existing plan to understand and define any actions against impacts of potential sources of contamination that could change under drought conditions. More information is available at https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/source-water-protection/.

G. **Maintain an Operations and Maintenance Plan and an Asset Management Plan**. Develop and maintain plans to help track the life of assets and act early on inventory items that will require maintenance over the summer months. Useful tools and resources are available at https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/resources/.

H. **Utilize the American Water Works Association (AWWA) M36 Water Loss Audit process and maintain a Water Loss Program**. Understand your system's water losses and develop a plan to reduce it. More information is available at <https://www.awwa.org/resources-tools/water-knowledge/water-loss-control.aspx>.

I. **Join the New Mexico Rural Water Association** as a resource for training and assistance. More information is available at <https://nmrwa.org/>.

NMED DWB Sustainable Water Infrastructure Group (SWIG) offers a variety of free trainings on these topics and others every month. Information on the classes and how to register can be found at https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/training-opportunities/.

SWIG also provides assistance to individual water systems by request, as resources allow.

For more information on the types of assistance and how to make a request, please visit the SWIG webpage https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/swig/ or contact David Torres, Source Water Specialist, at (505) 841-5306 or david.torres@state.nm.us.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Stringer, Chief

NMED Drinking Water Bureau

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https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/

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