



Decontamination Strategy Development

Introduction

Drinking water systems can face major challenges when confronting a contamination incident—whether accidental or intentional, natural or man-made. The challenges include not only isolating and treating contaminated water, but also decontaminating the storage, treatment, and distribution infrastructure during recovery and return to service.

To address water sector decontamination issues and challenges, in 2006, the EPA's Office of Ground Water & Drinking Water (OGWDW) began working closely with its partners and stakeholders to develop a decontamination strategy. The strategy will respond to the water sector's need for information, tools, and resources enabling the timely recovery and "return to service" of utility operations from "all hazards" contamination incidents. The strategy will also help meet requirements for EPA under Homeland Security Presidential Directive 10 (HSPD 10), which charges EPA with developing strategies, guidelines, and plans for decontamination in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal partners.

Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback

EPA first engaged its stakeholders and partners during the summer and autumn of 2006 on decontamination issues, challenges, and needs of the water sector. The sector responded positively and voluntarily. Feedback was received from more than 50 stakeholders and partners, including drinking water and wastewater utilities. The feedback confirmed that the water sector is not adequately prepared to deal with high consequence contamination events and that it is a challenge for the utilities to respond to numerous contamination scenarios. Feedback also highlighted critical decontamination needs in several areas, including training, guidance, planning, funding, and staffing resources. Continuing engagement of the water sector included a joint briefing of the Government Coordinating Council (GCC) and the Water Sector Coordinating Council (WSCC) on November 2, 2006. EPA also briefed the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators staff on January 25, 2007.

Strategy Development Process

During the first half of 2007, EPA is planning to continue to work closely with its partners while coordinating with the GCC and WSCC to establish a process for developing a water sector decontamination strategy. This process may include establishing a Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council (CIPAC) working group for decontamination. The working group will provide recommendations for strategy components and priorities by identifying decontamination products, training, outreach activities for the water sector, and recommendations for coordinating water sector research needs. EPA will coordinate with the National Homeland Security Research Center (NHSRC), the Office of Homeland Security, the National Decontamination Team, and EPA Regions while developing and implementing the strategy. Full implementation of the water sector decontamination strategy will depend on the availability of EPA funding.

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