

Report to the Governor
**Washington's Water System
 Capacity Development Program**



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The federal Safe Drinking Water Act was enacted in 1974 to help prevent illnesses from tap water. The Washington State Department of Health's Office of Drinking Water regulates public water systems under state law and under a negotiated agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to carry out the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The Act requires each state to have a strategy to ensure water systems have the technical, managerial, and financial capacity to deliver safe water to their customers. This report satisfies the requirement for states to report to EPA each year on their strategy and provide a progress report every three years to the Governor.

The following chart shows the number of Group A public water systems in Washington and the populations they serve. Washington also has more than 13,000 very small Group B water systems that are subject to State Board of Health requirements instead of the Safe Drinking Water Act. These very small systems are not included in this report.

	Systems	Residential Populations
Group A Community Systems	2,267	5,555,928
Serving 1,000 or more connections	223	5,015,559
Serving 100 to 999 connections	563	404,875
Serving 15 to 99 connections	1,390	132,128
Group A Non-Community Systems Serving businesses, schools, motels, and other settings in which people are away from home	1,931	6,946

New Systems Program: Annual Reporting Criteria

Capacity development programs need to include strategies for ensuring that all new systems have the technical, managerial, and financial capacity to be successful.

With this in mind, EPA has asked states to answer the following questions in their annual reports to address the status of their capacity development programs.

Has the state's legal authority (statutes and regulations) to implement the New Systems Program changed in the previous reporting year?

No.

Have there been any modifications to the state's control points (its implementing authorities to review and verify a newly proposed water system has satisfied all three aspects of capacity before it may be approved)?

No.

List new systems in the state within the past three years and indicate whether those systems have been on any of the annual Significant Non-Complier lists as generated annually by EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

There were 76 new systems added to our inventory in 2005-07. All of the new systems are considered small, and serve less than 3,301 people. The department placed 41 of these systems on the list for one or more types of violations.

The high rate of new, small systems incurring violations speaks to the difficulty in understanding complex chemical water quality monitoring requirements as well as the inability to factor in the cost of meeting the requirements. When these systems do monitor water quality, we see relatively low numbers of water quality issues.

This data indicates that our capacity development program is not adequate to help ensure that new small systems are fully capable. However, we have made significant progress over the last decade and we continue to explore how we can increase our effectiveness in this very important program.

We are currently evaluating our capacity development program and our compliance strategies as part of a legislative directive to study small water system issues. We plan to use the results of that study to make changes to our program that will increase our success. We will work with EPA as we develop new strategies, and we will highlight the changes in our next report.

What are we doing to correct, or what have we done, to keep these numbers low?

Of the 41 systems on the list, 32 have either completely resolved, or have resolved some but not all of the violations. Many are waiting to conduct water quality sampling for lead and copper which must happen in the second half of the year.

We are increasing our enforcement and improving our technical assistance efforts on the remaining nine systems that we have not been able to get back on track. The following chart shows the new systems in 2005-2007, the number of these systems on the list, and their progress in resolving their issues.

	Community Water Systems	Non-Transient Non-Community Systems	Subtotal
New in 2005-2007	43	33	76
On Significant Non-Complier List	25	16	41
Addressed all issues	15	7	22
Addressed some, but not all issues	5	5	10
Unaddressed issues	5	4	9

Existing System Strategy

In reference to the state’s approved existing system strategy, which programs, tools, and/or activities were used, and how did each assist existing federally regulated public water systems in acquiring and maintaining technical, managerial, and financial capacity?

We use a multi-component approach that:

- Informs water system purveyors about the requirements for owning and operating a water system.
- Provides training and guidance materials to help water purveyors provide safe and reliable drinking water.
- Reviews and approves planning and engineering documents.
- Regularly inspects water systems to ensure capacity and identify deficiencies.
- Notifies purveyors when they violate a regulation and informs them of actions necessary to correct the situation and return to compliance.
- Provides technical assistance to help water purveyors address specific violations or other challenges involved in providing safe and reliable drinking water.
- Provides funding assistance so systems can make needed improvements.
- Sets compliance priorities based on the potential threat to public health.

As a result of using this approach, we are seeing successes in a number of our drinking water program areas, including a dramatic increase in the number of systems conducting water quality monitoring on time—especially for nitrates. In addition, we have seen reduced coliform violations—a common indicator of the system’s overall quality.

Based on the existing system strategy, how has the state continued to identify systems in need of capacity development assistance?

This strategy enables us to determine which systems are struggling to maintain capacity. We identify areas of focus or concern as we review water quality data, perform routine inspections, and review water system planning documents.

During the reporting period, if the state has identified any Public Water System capacity concerns or capacity development needs (technical, managerial, or financial), what was the state's approach in offering and/or providing assistance?

Our compliance priorities are based on health risk, and we carry out compliance strategies to assure purveyors provide safe water. We are currently developing a more targeted and consistent approach to working with systems which have more than one compliance challenge. We also provide technical assistance and educational opportunities to help systems get back into compliance.

If the state performed a review of implementation of the existing system strategy during the previous year, discuss the review and how findings have been or may be addressed.

No. However, as stated above, we are in the midst of evaluating our existing system strategy and will detail our findings in our next report.

Did the state make any modifications to the existing system strategy?

No.

For more information

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