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"It is vitally important that the Utah DDW have sufficient resources to proactively prevent water system failures. Further cuts in funding could have significant negative impacts on the ability of DDW to meet minimal requirements."

(EPA Audit, 2011)



Utah Department of Environmental Quality Division of Drinking Water

Information Sheet

Division of Drinking Water

The Division of Drinking Water (DDW) is responsible for the programs that safeguard Utah's drinking water. While declining funds in recent years have stretched DDW's resources thin, the Division has consistently found ways to streamline its processes and programs by drawing on the expertise and experience of its highly qualified staff. Projected federal and state funding cuts, however, will have a dramatic effect on DDW's ability to provide essential services for drinking water systems and threaten some of the programs that are critical to keeping Utah drinking water safe and reliable.

Standards Protect Public Health

Drinking water standards, regulations, and water treatment programs protect the public health. The EPA sets strict standards for almost 105 different types of water contaminants, including microbiological organisms like cryptosporidium and E. coli, inorganic compounds like arsenic and lead, radioactive contaminants like uranium, and organic compounds like benzene and PCE. Public water treatment systems are required to treat water to remove suspended solids, chemicals, metals, fertilizers, pesticides, and disinfect harmful microorganisms that cause disease. Source protection plans and regular sampling ensure that drinking water wells and springs meet these same standards.

Programs Safeguard Drinking Water

The Division of Drinking Water regulates Utah's 1,019 drinking water systems through programs that monitor water quality, inspect water systems and treatment plants, protect drinking water sources, review engineering plans, provide specialized technical assistance to plant managers and operators, and offer financial assistance for water system construction. Four of these programs are in jeopardy from projected revenue shortfalls.

Backflow Prevention

Contaminants can enter a drinking water system from back siphoning or back pressure, which may allow untreated water or contaminants to flow into the drinking water supply. Irrigation water, oil, toxic boiler compounds, sewage, pesticides and dangerous, life-threatening substances have all found their way into drinking water systems in Utah through cross connections. DDW has a strong cross connection control program that trains and certifies Backflow Technicians, trains public water system personnel, evaluates backflow prevention programs, and provides technical assistance in the event of a backflow.

Sanitary Surveys

A sanitary survey is an on-site review of a public water system's water source, facilities, equipment, operations, and maintenance. A survey can identify system deficiencies and assess a system's ability to supply safe drinking water. DDW staff, DEQ District Engineers, and local health departments perform sanitary surveys for public water systems every three years. These regularly scheduled surveys help prevent the contamination of drinking water supplies and lower the risk of waterborne disease.

Technical Assistance

Small community water systems, located primarily in rural areas, make up over half of the water systems in the state. Most of these small systems are staffed by volunteers who rely on the technical advice and expertise of DDW staff. When public health or contamination issues arise, Division staff assist these smaller utilities to identify the causes of contamination and resolve the problem. DDW also engages in cooperative efforts with larger public water utilities, alerting them to pending rule changes or water treatment requirements. The Division then works with them to implement these changes effectively and economically. DDW also works with drinking water systems targeted by the EPA for enforcement actions, initiating state enforcement actions that bring systems into compliance under a reasonable timetable.

Electronic Data Management System

EPA is upgrading its Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), a critical tool for managing and tracking compliance with all EPA rules and state reporting requirements imposed by EPA. This upgrade will be complete in the fall of 2014 and will require DDW to update its interfacing applications to connect with the database. These applications include standard inventory reports, monitoring schedules, IPS reports, annual bacteriologic sampling summary and operator certification information.

Utah Could Lose Critical Services

The federal and state government share funding responsibilities for Utah's drinking water program. Seventy-five percent of the revenues for Division of Drinking Water programs come from the federal government. State funding dropped 40 percent between 2008 and 2010 and the 2013 sequestration will cut **almost half a million dollars** of federal money from DDW's already lean budget.

According to a 2011 EPA audit, the Division has done a remarkable job despite limited resources, but minimal funding is threatening its ability to implement and enforce current Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requirements.

For many years, the Division of Drinking Water has done more with less, but continued cuts have taken a toll. Without adequate funding, Utah will lose these essential drinking water services and possibly its primacy under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

- Under the current budget scenario, DDW will have to discontinue its Backflow Technician Certification Program. Without certified backflow technicians and cross connection control inspection and education, water systems would experience more occurrences of drinking water contamination, leading to increased outbreaks of waterborne illnesses, chemical poisoning, and possible deaths.

- It will be extremely difficult for local health departments to perform sanitary surveys on the current three-year schedule without an additional \$200,000. This lack of funding will jeopardize the proper operation of drinking water systems and Utah's primacy under SDWA.
- DDW will need to reduce or eliminate its technical assistance for smaller water systems. It would also have to discontinue its cooperative efforts with larger water systems. Small and large water systems trust DDW and rely heavily on its advice and expertise. Without access to this DDW guidance, minor water system issues could easily become major problems that could jeopardize public health.
- The Division needs \$100,000 to complete database system upgrades that would facilitate direct uploads to the database from electronic devices in the field and upgrade the interface application that would match the SDWIS upgrade. These system upgrades would increase efficiency, improve data entry accuracy, and save money over the long time. Without this technology, serious malfunctions could occur during the transfer to the upgraded SDWIS database and staff would have to commence the time-consuming process of entering data into the system manually. DDW will have to discontinue its Public Water System Reports, one of the most popular resources on the DEQ Web site.
- States must meet certain requirements for the EPA to grant them primary enforcement responsibility (primacy) for public drinking water systems. If Utah loses primacy for drinking water, the EPA would take over the state program and Utah would lose the funds used to construct drinking water infrastructure in the state.

Providing safe drinking water is an essential function of state and local government. Adequate funding will ensure that the DDW and public water systems can continue to meet this basic human need for safe, reliable drinking water.

