



Technical, Managerial, and Financial Capacity of Maine's Public Water Systems

Triennial Report to the Governor

Reporting Period: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2026

Pursuant to:

Title 42 chapter 6A, sub-chapter XII, Part B §300g-9

Submitted by:

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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Executive Summary

Maine's Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Drinking Water Program (DWP) works to ensure safe drinking water and protect public health in Maine by administering and enforcing drinking water regulations through the provision of technical, managerial, and financial assistance to public water systems. To comply with federal mandates under the Safe Drinking Water Act, as part of Maine's capacity development strategy¹, the DWP reports periodically on efficacy and progress. (Title 42 USC §300g-9(c)(3).) The reporting period for this report is for State fiscal years 2024-2026 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2026).

The 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) mandated the preparation of a triennial report to the Governor of each state to apprise the Governor of the efficacy of the Public Water System Capacity Development Program, and to report on the progress of improving the technical, managerial, and financial capacity operations of public water systems (PWS). This report is issued in fulfillment of that requirement.

Improving the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of a public water system increases the water system's ability to supply safe drinking water consistently and reliably to consumers. Over the past three years, the DWP has made great progress toward improving the capacity of PWS in Maine.

A principal measure of the success of the capacity development effort is the rate of compliance with the State and federal regulations related to safe drinking water. The DWP records indicate that PWS are more consistent in the collection of water samples, which has resulted in improved water quality. A summary of public water system violations for the reporting period can be found in Figure 1.

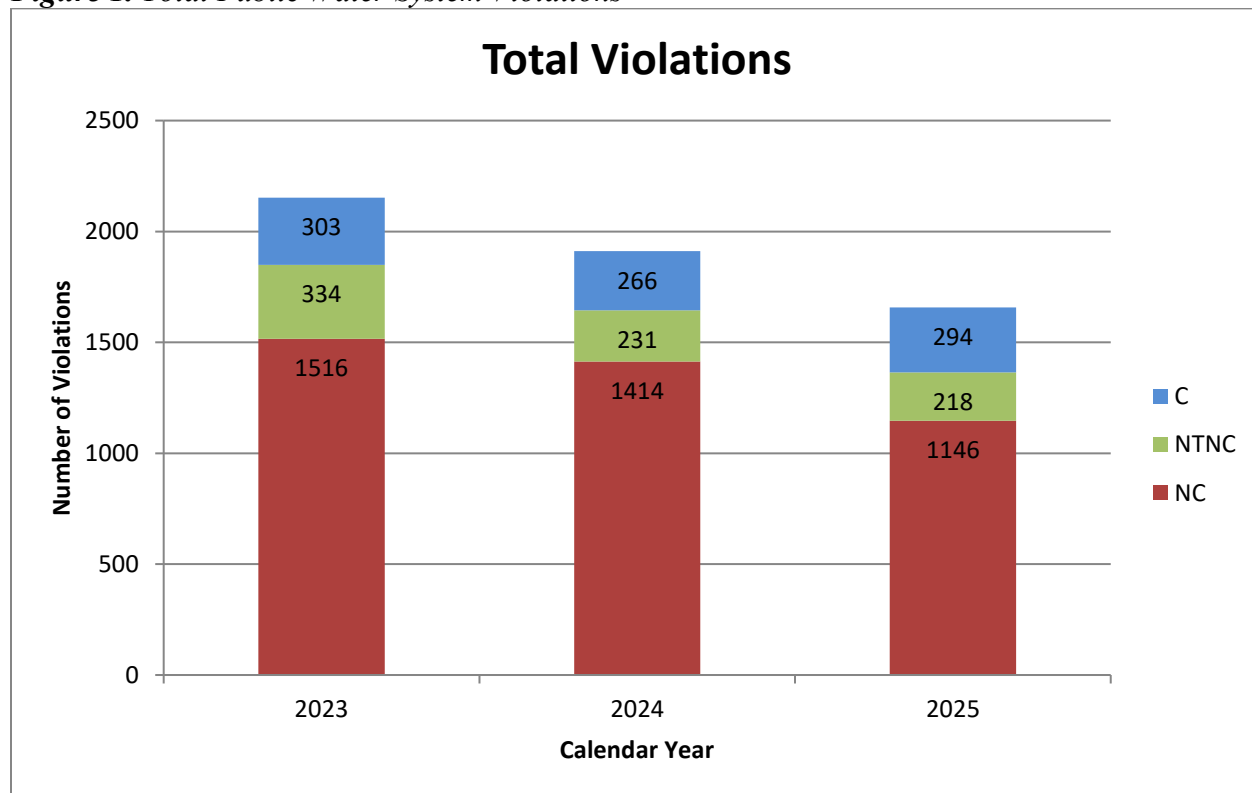
The DWP provides financial assistance to PWS throughout Maine to replace aging water mains and increase the efficiency and reliability of water treatment plants. In addition, the DWP worked with PWS to find new sources of drinking water, make improvements to drinking water quality, replace aging water mains, build new water storage tanks, and provide essential public health protection. The DWP also provides financial assistance through grant programs to assist PWS with developing plans and studies, protecting their water source, consolidating with another public water system, and installing treatment to resolve ongoing water quality issues. Over the past three years, the DWP awarded PWS with over 113.6 million dollars in loans and grants to assist with these critical infrastructure improvements. A summary of the funding used to support capacity development can be found in Table 1.

Ongoing training is essential to ensure that water operators, owners, and other personnel are up to date with current regulations and technologies. Water operators receive training through on-site technical assistance visits, and classroom and online training sessions. The DWP staff and contractors provide direct, on-site technical assistance and education to help water operators

¹ Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Drinking Water Safety, 2025, <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-living/health-and-safety/drinking-water-safety/resources/capacity-development>

maintain and improve their public water system operations and management. During the reporting period, 3,186 on-site visits were made to PWS by DWP staff and contractors. Classroom and online training help to build an operator’s knowledge on the operation and maintenance of a public water system through various training topics. With the assistance of DWP funding, 335 training classes were attended by 6,999 public water system personnel during the reporting period.

Figure 1. Total Public Water System Violations



Community (C): A public water system that supplies water to the same population year-round (residential population).
Non-Transient, Non-Community (NTNC): A public water system that regularly supplies water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round. Some examples are schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals, which have their own public water systems.
Transient, Non-Community (NC): A public water system that provides water in a place such as a restaurant or campground where people do not remain for long periods of time.

Table 1. Funding Capacity Development Summary

	State Fiscal Year 2024	State Fiscal Year 2025	State Fiscal Year 2026	Totals
Loans*				
Emergency Construction Fund	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Project Capital Improvements	\$39,555,231	\$36,324,879	\$34,296,317	\$110,176,427
Land Acquisition	\$324,188	\$59,196	\$111,100	\$494,484
Very Small System Compliance	\$0	\$184,810	\$19,913	\$204,724
Grants*				
Capacity Development	\$471,569	\$495,774	\$683,324	\$1,650,667
Emerging Contaminant (PFAS)	\$0	\$0	\$220,833	\$220,833
Source Protection	\$131,091	\$124,141	\$141,951	\$397,183
System Consolidation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Very Small System Total Coliform	\$57,185	\$13,677	\$18,049	\$88,911
Water System Asset Security	\$112,296	\$157,767	\$141,238	\$411,301
Contracted Services*				
Training Reimbursement	\$200,000	\$160,350	\$197,930	\$558,280
Maine Rural Water Association	\$528,783	\$305,725	\$382,859	\$1,217,366
Maine Water Utilities Association	\$295,500	\$28,300	\$40,000	\$363,800
Rural Community Action Program	\$46,000	\$0	\$0	\$46,000
DWP Employees				
Federal Funding	\$4,311,397	\$5,004,959	\$5,895,758	\$15,212,114
Other Special Revenue	\$1,637,638	\$2,112,147	\$2,120,276	\$5,870,061
General Fund	\$168,231	\$260,174	\$274,867	\$703,272
Total Number of Employees	54	55	55	
<p>* Grants and Contracted Service are 100 percent funded with federal funds. Construction loans are a combination of federal funds (including grants funds by the American Rescue Plan Act), repayment funds, and “State Match.” Access to the annual federal grant requires a 20 percent State Match.</p>				

Background

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) was established in 1974 to protect public health by regulating drinking water contaminants. The SDWA was structured to enable each state to become a primacy agency, the administrative and enforcement arm of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) at the state level. The Drinking Water Program (DWP) is the primacy agency for the State of Maine. The DWP is located within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC), in the Division of Environmental and Community Health.

The 1996 Amendments to the SDWA added a requirement for each state to establish a Capacity Development Program. Capacity development's broad goal is to assist PWS in both maintaining and improving their technical, managerial, and financial operations, referred to as *the capacity*, to meet federally mandated drinking water requirements. Capacity development encompasses many activities performed by the DWP and third-party organizations involved in drinking water operations. The effectiveness of a public water system's capacity depends upon the interaction of these three criteria:

- **Technical Capacity** refers to the ability of a public water system to meet standards and to provide safe and reliable drinking water. Key to technical capacity is operator expertise and infrastructure adequacy (source water adequacy and collection, storage, treatment, and distribution facilities).
- **Managerial Capacity** refers to the ability of personnel to manage and administer or to otherwise operate the public water system. Key items for managerial capacity include ownership, organization, accountability, and planning.
- **Financial Capacity** refers generally to the monetary resources of the public water system and includes cost effectiveness, creditworthiness, fiscal control, cash flow, and cash reserves.

To support each state's capacity development activities and to provide direction for those activities, each state was mandated to develop a Capacity Development Strategy (Strategy) with the input and assistance of a committee of stakeholders, known as an Advisory Committee. Based upon the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the DWP developed 11 specific goals for Maine's Strategy. The Strategy was completed and accepted in 2000. The Strategy is designed to prevent the creation of non-viable PWS, to identify PWS at risk, and to assist PWS to acquire, enhance and maintain public water system capacity. Given that each capacity element overlaps and consequently supports the others, any weakness or failure of an individual element can lead to the collapse of the others.

In 2010, the DWP realized the need to revisit the Strategy to review and revise the goals set in 2000. The DWP and a stakeholder group reviewed and revised the Strategy. America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA) included the requirement for states to incorporate asset management into their strategies. In 2022, the DWP and a stakeholder group reviewed and revised the Strategy to include the asset management provisions.

The DWP assists nearly 1,900 PWS with maintaining and enhancing technical, managerial, and financial capacity. The types and sizes of PWS regulated by the DWP are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of Public Water Systems*

	Population Size Served				
	25-500	501-3,300	3,301-10,000	10,001-100,000	100,001+
Community	267	81	25	12	1
Non-Transient, Non-Community	363	17	0	0	0
Transient, Non-Community	1,057	42	0	0	0
Total	1,687	140	25	12	1

Community: A public water system that supplies water to the same population year-round (residential population).

Non-Transient, Non-Community: A public water system that regularly supplies water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round. Some examples are schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals, which have their own public water systems.

Transient, Non-Community: A public water system that provides water in a place such as a restaurant or campground where people do not remain for long periods of time.

*The information above and throughout this report does not include bottled water facilities. Under Maine statute water bottlers are considered Transient Public Water Systems. However, federal law does not recognize water bottlers as public water systems, so they are not included in this federally mandated report.

Grant and Loan Programs

Grant and loan allocations depend on available federal funds which fluctuate from year to year. During the three-year period of this report, over 113.6 million dollars was invested into public water system improvements through loans and grants.

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program

The 1996 Amendments to the SDWA included allocations for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). The DWSRF program is a State operated program to provide loans and other financial assistance for public drinking water improvement projects. The SDWA requires that states provide 20 percent matching funds to federal dollars, to capitalize the DWSRF program. Therefore, every dollar invested by the State of Maine secures five federal dollars.

The DWSRF provides funding to PWS throughout Maine to improve or replace water system pipes, treatment plants, storage tanks, and sources of water to ensure safe drinking water and provide essential public health protection. Funding for drinking water infrastructure improvement projects is available as low interest loans. Disadvantaged community (PWS) may receive further assistance through principal forgiveness. Assistance subsidies in the form of principal forgiveness available to eligible disadvantaged communities will be at levels of 20, 35, 50, 65 and 85 percent based on community median household income and residential water user rates.

The DWP and the Maine Municipal Bond Bank (MMBB) administer the DWSRF jointly. The DWP is the lead administrator and is responsible for project management and technical support, as well as overseeing activities. The MMBB is the financial administrator and oversees the loan application process and tracks money to and from the fund.

A portion of the federal grant is set aside each year from the revolving project loan fund and used for non-project activities. Those activities include source protection programs, technical assistance to small PWS, a revolving loan fund for land acquisitions, and PWS planning grants.

Emergency Construction Fund

The Emergency Construction Fund, a carve out of the broader Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, provides loans to PWS that have experienced a recent unexpected event that poses a serious threat to public health and welfare. This may include a severe weather event, accident or sabotage that results in infrastructure damage, or another event that causes a sudden and dramatic impact to drinking water quality and/or available quantity. The DWP has the discretion to determine what constitutes an emergency. The Emergency Construction Fund was not utilized during the reporting period.

\$110,176,427 was loaned to public water systems using the DWSRF during the reporting period.
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Land Acquisition Loan Program

Public water system ownership or legal control of the land around its source is the most effective means of protecting the source from contamination. Under the Land Acquisition Loan Program,

Community Public Water Systems and non-profit Non-Community Public Water Systems may apply for low-interest loans with 50 percent principal forgiveness of up to \$20,000 maximum for the purchase of land and/or conservation easement for drinking water source protection. Projects that demonstrate a commitment to the ongoing protection of a system's drinking water source through land acquisition and/or easement are eligible for these loans. Loans may be issued for an amount greater than \$40,000. However, principal forgiveness will not be applied to the portion of the loan exceeding \$40,000. Furthermore, principal forgiveness and low-interest loan rates will only be applied to the portion of the purchase price that represents the percentage of the purchased land located within the defined wellhead protection area (for wells) or contributing watershed (for surface water bodies). The public water system must demonstrate technical, managerial, and financial capability.

\$494,484 was loaned to public water systems using the Land Acquisition Loan Program during the reporting period.

Very Small System Compliance Loan Program

The Very Small System Compliance Loan Program allows Community Public Water Systems (except those regulated by the Maine Public Utilities Commission) with a population of 100 or less, and all non-profit, Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Systems to receive up to \$50,000 per project with an additional \$10,000 to cover the cost of engineering expenses. The loan program provides 100 percent principal forgiveness. Projects must be necessary to achieve compliance with a current or future standard of the SDWA, excluding the Revised Total Coliform Rule. This loan program assists PWS with repeat violations return to compliance with drinking water regulations.

\$204,724 was loaned to public water systems using the Land Acquisition Loan Program during the reporting period.

Capacity Development Grant Program

Capacity Development Grant funding is available to Community Public Water Systems and non-profit, Non-Community Public Water Systems for the preparation of engineering or planning studies or reports to help PWS maintain or improve technical, managerial, and financial capacity. The grant funding is provided on a reimbursement basis to PWS that have completed approved plans or studies. PWS that serve 100 or less can receive grants for 90 percent of the project costs, up to a maximum reimbursement amount of \$9,000. Larger PWS can receive grants for 75 percent of the project costs, up to a maximum reimbursement amount of \$30,000.

\$1,650,667 was reimbursed to public water systems using the Capacity Development Grant Program during the reporting period.

Emerging Contaminant Grant Program (Larger Systems)

Emerging Contaminant Grants are for Community or Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Systems to address PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination issues. Funding can be used for installation of treatment for PFAS, any necessary pre- or post-treatments and any associated engineering expenses. Funding can be used for building modifications to accommodate treatment or to cover the costs of the construction of an auxiliary building if

treatment will not fit within existing facility's footprint. Projects with total funding requests less than \$250,000 will be awarded with no matching criteria and at 100 percent principal forgiveness. For any project for which the grant is awarded at \$250,000 or greater, the grant will cover 90 percent of eligible project expenses.

Small or Disadvantaged Community Emerging Contaminant Grant

Small or Disadvantaged Community Emerging Contaminant Grants are for small Community Public Water Systems serving a population of less than 10,000 or meet the definition of disadvantaged to address PFAS contamination issues. Funding can be used for installation of treatment for PFAS, any necessary pre- or post-treatments and any associated engineering expenses. Funding can be used for building modifications to accommodate treatment or to cover the costs of the construction of an auxiliary building if treatment will not fit within existing facility's footprint. Projects with total funding requests less than \$250,000 will be awarded with no matching criteria and at 100 percent principal forgiveness. For any project for which the grant is awarded at \$250,000 or greater, the grant will cover 90 percent of eligible project expenses.

Small Public Water System Emerging Contaminant Grant Program

Small Public Water System Emerging Contaminant Grants are for small Community or Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Systems serving a population of 100 or less. Funding can be used for the installation of treatment for PFAS and any necessary pre- or post-treatments. Funding can be used for building modifications to accommodate treatment or to cover the costs of the installation of a small auxiliary building if treatment will not fit within existing facility's footprint. Funding can also be used for system consolidation with a neighboring public water system that does not have PFAS levels exceeding federal proposed MCL or for development of a new water source. PWS qualify for up to \$50,000 in the form of a 100 percent principal forgiveness loan. Additional construction and treatment funding beyond \$50,000 may be awarded on a case-by-case basis determined by site specific needs.

Emerging Contaminant Planning Grant Program

Emerging Contaminant Planning Grants are for Community or Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Systems with a population greater than 100 to study and assess PFAS contamination issues with more complex treatment needs. Eligible expenses may include pilot studies to evaluate treatment techniques, engineering expenses for the design of treatment facilities, hydrogeological studies for the investigation of replacement water source(s), and preliminary engineering reports and cost assessments for system consolidation and water main extensions. Grants are for up to \$200,000.

Very Small System Emerging Contaminant Planning Grant Program

Small Public Water System Emerging Contaminant Planning Grants are for very small Community or Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Systems serving a population of 100 or less or needing a filtration capacity of approximately 10gpm or less. Eligible expenses may include pilot studies to evaluate treatment techniques, engineering expenses for the design of treatment facilities, hydrogeological studies for the investigation of replacement water source(s), and preliminary engineering reports and cost assessments for system consolidation and water main extensions. Grants are for up to \$30,000.

Water Main Extension to Private Wells Containing PFAS

Water Main Extension Grants are intended to address privately owned wells with PFAS levels greater than the proposed federal MCL by extension of water mains from Community Public Water Systems that are below the federal proposed MCL for PFAS or are actively investigating or implementing treatment options if currently exceeding the proposed MCL. Funding is awarded in the form of fully forgiven loans. Funding is awarded at a rate of \$100,000 per residential unit or place of business connection up to a limit of \$2,000,000 per extension. Funding must be applied for by the Community Public Water System who is extending their distribution main.

Emerging Contaminant Consolidation Grant

Emerging Contaminant Consolidation Grants are for the consolidation of a Community or Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water System with a public water system that is below the federal proposed MCL for PFAS or is actively investigating or implementing treatment options if currently exceeding the proposed MCL. Funding is awarded in the form of fully forgiven loans. The first \$249,999 is 100 percent principal forgiveness with no matching criteria. For any project which equals or exceeds \$250,000, the grant will cover 50 percent of remaining eligible project expenses up to a limit of \$2,000,000 with 100 percent principal forgiveness. When projects equal or exceed \$250,000, the public water system is responsible for 50 percent share of remaining balance.

\$220,833 was granted to public water systems using emerging contaminant grant programs during the reporting period.

System Consolidation Grant Program

The System Consolidation Grant Program assists PWS that have a technical, managerial, or financial capacity issue consolidate with a more viable public water system. The grant will fund no more than 50 percent of the cost of consolidation for a for-profit public water system and no more than 75 percent of the cost of consolidation for a non-profit public water system. Grant awards are for up to \$150,000. No PWS used the System Consolidation Grant Program during the reporting period.

Very Small System Total Coliform Grant Program

Very Small System Total Coliform Grants are for Community and non-profit Non-Community Public Water Systems with a population of 100 or less served by a groundwater source to install a continuous chlorination disinfection system that is needed to achieve compliance with the Revised Total Coliform Rule. Grant awards are for up to \$10,000.

\$88,911 was reimbursed to public water systems using the Very Small Total Coliform Grant Program during the reporting period.

Water System Asset Security Grant Program

Water System Asset Security Grants are for Community and non-profit, Non-Community Public Water Systems for projects focused on the planning and implementation of security measures to promote physical security and/or protection against cyberattacks. Eligible activities for the security measures include but are not limited to purchase and installation of fencing, signs,

cameras, and alarm systems, as well as software upgrades and cybersecurity projects or assessments. Grants are awarded up to \$10,000 with a few grant awards of up to \$20,000 depending on the scope of the project.

\$411,301 was reimbursed to public water systems using the Water System Asset Security Grant Program during the reporting period.

Source Protection Grant Program

Source Protection Grants are for Community and non-profit, Non-Community Public Water Systems. Source Protection Grants replaced the former Wellhead Protection Grants and Source Water Protection Grants into a single program and application. This combined program grants funding for the planning and/or implementation of source water protection activities for both ground water and surface water sources. Eligible activities include but are not limited to developing useful base maps, drafting an aquifer protection ordinance, purchasing and installing signage to demarcate source protection areas, development or updating of watershed management plans, buffer establishment and upkeep, road and storm water management and reconstruction activities, mitigation of potential sources of contamination, and developing public outreach and educational programs and materials. Grants are awarded up to \$10,000 with a few grant awards of up to \$20,000 for exceptional projects that demonstrate an on-going commitment to source water protection.

\$397,183 was reimbursed to public water systems using the Source Protection Grant Program during the reporting period.

Technical Assistance to Public Water Systems by DWP Staff

Capacity Development Reviews

A Capacity Development Review assesses a public water system's source water and infrastructure adequacy, implementation of technical knowledge, ownership accountability, staffing and organization, effective external linkages, short-term and long-term planning, revenue sufficiency, credit worthiness, and fiscal management and controls. Before capital loans are approved by the DWP for drinking water construction projects or the purchase of land to safeguard water sources, applicants must undergo a Capacity Development Review to assure that the PWS possess adequate technical, managerial, and financial capacity.

95 public water systems underwent a Capacity Development Review during the reporting period.

Sanitary Surveys

A Sanitary Survey is an on-site inspection of a public water system's water source, treatment, distribution system, finished water storage, pumps, pump facilities and controls, monitoring, reporting and data verification, water system management and operations, and operator compliance with state requirements. Sanitary Surveys are designed to identify conditions that may present a sanitary or public health risk. They help to identify PWS that require technical or managerial capacity development assistance.

Community Public Water Systems are required to undergo a Sanitary Survey every three years; these PWS serve the same population year-round. Non-Community Public Water Systems are required to undergo a Sanitary Survey every five years; these PWS serve places like schools, office buildings, hospitals, restaurants, and campgrounds that have their own water source.

1,283 Sanitary Surveys were conducted at public water systems during the reporting period.

Source Water Assessment Program

The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act required each state to develop a program for assessing the susceptibility to contamination of each public drinking water source in the State. The DWP wants to ensure that when a water supply is identified as being at risk of contamination, Maine's PWS are made aware so that the appropriate steps can be taken to minimize or eliminate the risk. Source Water Assessments include:

- A delineation of the recharge area of a well or watershed of a surface water body;
- An inventory of land uses and potential contamination sources which exist, or could exist within the delineated source water protection area; and
- An evaluation of the susceptibility to contamination of the water source by the potential hazards that are identified in the inventory.

Emergency Preparedness Planning

The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Act of 2002 included amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act that required all PWS serving more than 3,300 people to develop an emergency response plan.

In 2005, the DWP developed an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for PWS serving less than 3,300 to assure that all PWS have an ERP. The DWP distributed the ERP to all PWS with populations less than 3,300. In 2011, the DWP developed an updated Emergency Response Plan of Action² for PWS serving fewer than 3,300 people. The DWP also developed a simplified version of the Emergency Response Plan of Action for PWS serving less than 500 people. The DWP assists with the completion of an Emergency Response Plan of Action when requested by PWS. In 2026 a one-page Emergency Contact Page was developed for PWS and was printed on brightly colored cardstock. These have been distributed to PWS during scheduled sanitary surveys, technical assistance visits, as well as trainings and conferences.

The America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) of 2018 required that all Community Public Water Systems serving more than 3,000 people to develop or update risk and resilience assessments and emergency response plans, and submit certification to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) that those plans were completed. AWIA requires that these PWS review their risk and resilience assessments, and emergency response plans every five years to determine if they need to be revised. Upon completion of such a review, the PWS must submit certification to the USEPA that they have reviewed the risk and resilience assessments and emergency response plans and revised them, if applicable.

² Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Resources: Security and Emergency Response Planning, 2025, <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-living/health-and-safety/drinking-water-safety/public-water-systems/resources-security-and-emergency-response-planning>

Capacity Development Services Funded All or in Part by the DWP -

Operator Licensing

Operators of Maine's PWS are the first and foremost protectors of the safety of drinking water. Maine's PWS span a wide spectrum of complexities and sizes with every operator responsible for the same end results: safe drinking water and adequate water supply for sanitary uses and fire protection. The Board of Licensure of Water System Operators assures that operators meet certain standards. This is accomplished by evaluating experience and education in application review, and performance and successful completion of a nationally verified examination. Operator Licensing serves to assist operators in achieving and maintaining this professionalism by offering and finding appropriate training and assuring appropriate operator coverage at PWS.

PWS are defined through a process of grading points, Class I to IV in both treatment and distribution categories according to complexity and population served. Operators of these PWS must show competency by successfully completing examinations in both treatment and distribution categories. Very Small Water Systems operators are another classification that covers both treatment and distribution characteristics of PWS with less than a population of 500.

Over the past several years, the number of licensed water operators has been decreasing due to water operators reaching retirement age. This trend is being seen nationally, and there is a concern that there will be a shortage of licensed water operators in the future. License holders must earn continuing education credits for license renewal. The number of training contact hours required for license renewal depends on the classification of the license. Table 3 illustrates the two-year requirements.

<u>2023 Operator Licensing</u> 816 water operators licensed 16 water operators with Operator-In-Training license
<u>2024 Operator Licensing</u> 817 water operators licensed 14 water operators with Operator-In-Training license
<u>2025 Operator Licensing</u> 807 water operators licensed 6 water operators with Operator-In-Training license

Table 3. Training Contact Hour Renewal Requirements

Operator Class	Contact Hours Required
Very Small Water System	6 Training Contact Hours
Class I	12 Training Contact Hours
Class II	18 Training Contact Hours
Class III	24 Training Contact Hours
Class IV	24 Training Contact Hours

Operator Training

The DWP Capacity Development Training Reimbursement Fund allows training providers to receive reimbursement for training public water system employees, operators, owners, trustees or volunteers, and all licensed water operators. The purpose of the Capacity Development Training Reimbursement Fund is to subsidize the costs associated with training public water system personnel and operators on topics approved by the Board of Licensure of Water System Operators.

335 training classes were attended by **6,999** public water system personnel during the reporting period.

\$558,280 was reimbursed to technical assistance providers for training during the reporting period.

Maine Rural Water Association Technical Assistance

Maine Rural Water Association (MRWA) provides capacity building services such as assisting PWS with developing their annual Consumer Confidence Report, vulnerability assessments and emergency response planning, income surveys, rate cases, grant writing and loan assistance, water leak detection and line location, compliance with drinking water regulations, and source protection. The DWP and MRWA collaborate on assisting PWS with significant capacity issues by determining the issues and bringing them back into compliance. The DWP and MRWA work together to assist PWS during emergency events.

Water Quality Specialists

The DWP funds Water Quality Specialists at the MRWA. The Water Quality Specialists provide direct, on-site technical assistance and water operation advice to small PWS that serve a population of less than 10,000 people. They also serve as a liaison between PWS and the DWP. The DWP also works closely with the MRWA to provide education to public water system personnel. These activities directly support technical, financial, and managerial capacity.

During 2026, the DWP generated a list of Community Public Water Systems for the MRWA Water Quality Specialists to visit. These Community Public Water Systems were selected based on a population of 100 or less and were not due for a Sanitary Survey in 2026. This list comprised 112 Community Public Water Systems for this informal Capacity Check-in evaluation. The DWP revised the Capacity Development Review question set used to evaluate capacity of PWS receiving State Revolving Funds to generate a shorter question set for these Capacity Check-in visits. The visits were used as a small pilot to evaluate how capacity at PWS could be evaluated in a more proactive approach outside of the State Revolving Fund loan/grant process. Currently, the MRWA Water Quality Specialists have completed half of these visits and plan to continue throughout the rest of 2026. While still being developed, the goal is to connect PWS that demonstrate gaps with technical, managerial, or financial capacity to funding or technical assistance resources to increase their capacity.

1,177 MRWA Water Quality Specialist on-site visits were conducted during the reporting period.

\$712,000 was provided to MRWA for technical assistance to public water systems during the reporting period.

Financial Circuit Riders

The DWP funds Financial Circuit Riders from the MRWA to provide technical assistance and training to build financial capacity in Community Public Water Systems serving a population of less than 10,000 people. The Financial Circuit Riders provide technical assistance and training to build financial capacity through personalized one-to-one, on-site training, remote assistance via phone or internet, and response to training requests for regional utility meetings. The Financial Circuit Riders make preemptive visits, respond to PWS requests for assistance or respond to DWP compliance directives.

\$234,416 was provided to MRWA for Financial Circuit Rider assistance to public water systems during the reporting period.

Benchmarking Database

The DWP funded MRWA for the development and maintenance of a benchmarking database for PWS. The drinking water industry faces significant financial and operational challenges due to aging infrastructure. Industry leaders, policy makers, and regulators must communicate and understand the current financial and asset conditions of individual utilities and the overall drinking water industry in Maine. Standardized metrics that assess financial health, operational parameters, and asset information are needed to provide valuable insight when comparing utilities. The long-term goal is the development of a sustainable electronic rational benchmarking database containing key financial, operational, and asset metrics for Public Utilities Commission regulated PWS. The database collects and analyzes public water system financial and operational data for access to all PWS and the DWP to help develop, track, and prioritize long-term public drinking water infrastructure needs.

\$35,814 was provided to MRWA for development of a benchmarking database during the reporting period.

Emergency Response Tabletop Exercises

The DWP funded MRWA to plan and execute Resilience Response Drills, a modernized and streamlined approach to traditional tabletop exercises (TTX). The program offers a refreshed, small-system-friendly version of the concept that is short, practical, and outcome-driven. These drills focus on realistic Maine-based incidents such as extended power loss, severe weather impacts, supply chain disruptions, cyber/communications failures, and staffing limitations. Unlike traditional TTX formats that can feel time-consuming and overly theoretical, MRWA's Resilience Response Drills are structured as a focused walkthrough of key decisions and response actions, and each participating system receives a tangible work product at the conclusion of the drill, such as a Priority Action List/Improvement Plan and recommended updates to Emergency Response Plans.

\$58,841 provided to MRWA to facilitate tabletop exercises during the reporting period.

Risk Resiliency Assessments

America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA) required all Community Water Systems with a population greater than 3,300 to complete a Risk and Resilience Assessment (RRA) to identify and address threats from malevolent acts and natural hazards that could threaten safe drinking water. Additionally, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) highly recommends that very small Community Water Systems serving populations under 3,300 conduct an RRA. The DWP funded MRWA to offer assistance to small Community Water Systems (under 10,000 population), including helping with initial RRAs, recertifications, and Emergency Response Plans. Eligible participants must be current Maine Water and Wastewater Response Network (MEWARN) members, with preference given to disadvantaged communities. The project includes on-site technical assistance, identifying hazards, assessing infrastructure resilience, and helping update Emergency Response Plans.

\$463 was provided to MRWA for development of vulnerability assessments during the reporting period.

Business Continuity Plans

The DWP funded MRWA to help PWS develop business continuity plans to maintain financial, managerial, and functional operations following a disruptive incident.

MRWA worked with PWS to facilitate roundtable exercises that simulate Business Continuity Plan activation, implementation, deactivation, and reconstitution, addressing vulnerabilities like access to critical systems, staff, and data. The goal is to improve preparedness for disruptions, from staff separation to system failures. Deliverables include identifying participants, developing assessment checklists, coordinating meetings, creating a Situation Manual, and providing After Action Reports with standard operating procedures.

\$14,901 was provided to MRWA for business continuity planning during the reporting period.

Annual Conference

The DWP provided MRWA funding to help offset the costs of developing and hosting their annual conference and trade show. The annual conference and trade show provides the drinking water industry with access to quality educational seminars, opportunities to connect with funders and industry partners, and valuable networking opportunities among industry professionals.

\$40,000 was provided to MRWA for their annual conference during the reporting period.

Revenue Needs

The DWP funded MRWA to help water utility managers be proactive in financial planning by utilizing a revenue needs tool. It is intended to help utility managers present cohesive information to trustees. A simple comparison of a utility's user rates to others does not provide a complete picture of a utility's specific needs. Each utility has unique revenue requirements and rates should be set to meet or work towards their respective utility's needs and not simply adopt a mindset of charging a bit less than a neighboring utility.

\$6,624 was provided to MRWA for a revenue needs tool during the reporting period.

Maine Water Utilities Association

The Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) represents the water supply profession through education, legislation, policy, and networking. MWUA holds bi-monthly meetings, shares knowledge, and provides mutual support. Some DWP employees serve on MWUA committees in advisory and participatory roles. DWP employee participation in these committees helps the DWP understand the current and emerging needs of Maine's PWS, and allows the DWP opportunities to provide valuable capacity development guidance to water utilities.

Leadership Training

The DWP funded MWUA to develop and conduct leadership training for public water system superintendents and governing boards. The training focuses on financial, budgetary, regulatory, legislative, human resources, and other subject matters. The DWP funds costs to implement the training along with a scholarship tuition program to help reach smaller and disadvantaged PWS.

\$65,000 was provided to MWUA for leadership training during the reporting period.

Trustee Training

All trustees can benefit from a guidance document with their roles, responsibilities, and duties. These can vary for each public water system, but there are many commonalities and important laws/policies for boards and trustees to be aware of. Without this knowledge, they are hampered in their ability to perform the necessary duties that their roles require. The DWP funded MWUA to develop a guidance document, specifically tailored for Maine, with training to reinforce and practice the knowledge contained within the guidance document.

\$40,000 was provided to MWUA for development of the trustee training guidance document and training during the reporting period.

Water Operators' Toolbox

The DWP funded MWUA to work with PWS to determine their needs as it relates to technologies and tools for use in calculating data during their daily duties. Calculators were developed for the following categories: chemical feed pumps, disinfection and treatment, emergency, safety and security, water loss, Public Utilities Commission, and conversions. MWUA maintains the calculators on their website for PWS to use.

\$11,150 was provided to MWUA for the operators' toolbox during the reporting period.

Funding Resources Guide

The DWP funded MWUA to update a previously developed funding resources guide for PWS and put the information into an online and mobile friendly database. The information contained in the database is easily searchable and allows PWS to quickly find funding sources relevant to their situations and needs by matching their information with different options in the database.

\$16,000 was provided to MWUA for the funding resources guide during the reporting period.

Helping Hand Survey

The DWP funded MWUA to design a robust survey to collect information, experiences, and relevant data from PWS about the tools, technologies, and digital systems they utilize daily to ensure safe drinking water, fire protection, and affordability for their customers. The data is collected and compiled in a centralized database so anyone can go to find the information they need to make an informed decision in choosing and maintaining their tools, technologies, and digital systems.

\$11,150 was provided to MWUA for the helping hand survey during the reporting period.

Tabletop Exercises

The DWP funded MWUA to develop and facilitate a series of tabletop scenario-based exercises. The tabletop exercises gather regional groups of public water system professionals together to work through facilitated emergencies. Topics could be contamination, drought, pandemic, ice storm, and/or other topics as deemed necessary by the DWP and exercise stakeholders.

\$114,000 was provided to MWUA for tabletop exercises during the reporting period.

Annual Conference

The DWP provided MWUA funding to help offset the costs of developing and hosting their annual conference and trade show. The annual conference and trade show brings together water operators and industry professionals from across Maine to share knowledge and experiences, build professional connections, and participate in education training sessions that support professional development and provide training contact hours.

\$40,000 was provided to MWUA for their annual conference during the reporting period.

Cybersecurity Templates

The DWP funded MWUA to develop a series of cybersecurity policy templates specifically designed to help water systems strengthen their cybersecurity practices and implement effective policies. These policies allow water systems to promote cybersecurity awareness, training, and acceptable actions pertaining to Information Technology (IT) systems.

\$28,500 was provided to MWUA to develop cybersecurity templates during the reporting period.

Risk and Resiliency Assessments

The DWP funded MWUA to develop a Small System Risk and Resiliency Assessment Template and deliver regional workshops to guide PWS in the template's use and implementation.

\$38,000 was provided to MWUA to develop a Small System Risk and Resiliency Assessment Template and deliver workshops during the reporting period.

Rural Community Assistance Program Solutions Training

Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) Solutions provides direct assistance to communities and PWS. The DWP has referred PWS to RCAP Solutions for help in capacity building. RCAP specialists have assisted these PWS by providing advice, education, and direction on water system operations, budgeting and financial analysis, asset management, strategic planning, administrative operations, and improving overseer board operations.

Capacity Development Training

The DWP funded RCAP to provide capacity development training for PWS that are receiving principal forgiveness on DWSRF construction loans. RCAP delivers structured onsite training to the PWS.

\$46,000 was provided to RCAP for capacity development training of public water system personnel during the reporting period.

Maine Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network

The Maine Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (MEWARN) allows public water and wastewater systems to receive rapid mutual aid and assistance from other public water and wastewater systems to restore services damaged by natural or man-made incidents. MEWARN was formed in 2008 through partnerships among public and private water and wastewater utilities, key representatives from Maine's water and wastewater professional associations, DWP, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Emergency Management Agency, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 1. This collaboration facilitates pre-disaster planning and training, encourages sharing information, and lessons learned from other disasters.

The heart of MEWARN is the mutual aid and assistance agreement, which addresses members' responsibilities, procedures, and protocols for providing mutual aid, legal and liability concerns, and issues related to crossing jurisdictional boundaries to provide emergency aid. MEWARN offers a practical and affordable approach with multiple benefits for utility members and Maine's communities. The MEWARN is available to all public water and wastewater systems in Maine. Participation is voluntary, is not mandated by any local, state, or federal regulation, and is offered at no cost to participants.

\$114,309 was provided to MRWA for emergency preparedness technical assistance and MEWARN administrative support during the reporting period.

Compliance and Enforcement

Through enforcement activities, PWS that have long-term violations are returned to compliance. The DWP Enforcement staff assists PWS by negotiating settlements and guiding PWS with required actions, to return them to compliance. Required actions may include the installation of proper water treatment or adherence to sampling schedules. DWP staff works with partnering State agencies to help ensure that the public has access to safe drinking water. Most notably, DWP staff works with Maine CDC - Health Inspection Program to coordinate efforts in confirming that eating establishments and lodging establishments comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Maine Rural Water Association works with DWP staff to provide education to PWS, to assist in public notification, and to bring recalcitrant PWS back into compliance.

52 public water systems were issued Administrative Consent Orders during the reporting period.

17 public water systems were issued Administrative Consent Orders and Conditional Penalty Assessments during the reporting period.

9 public water systems were issued Administrative Penalties during the reporting period.

Drinking Water Violations

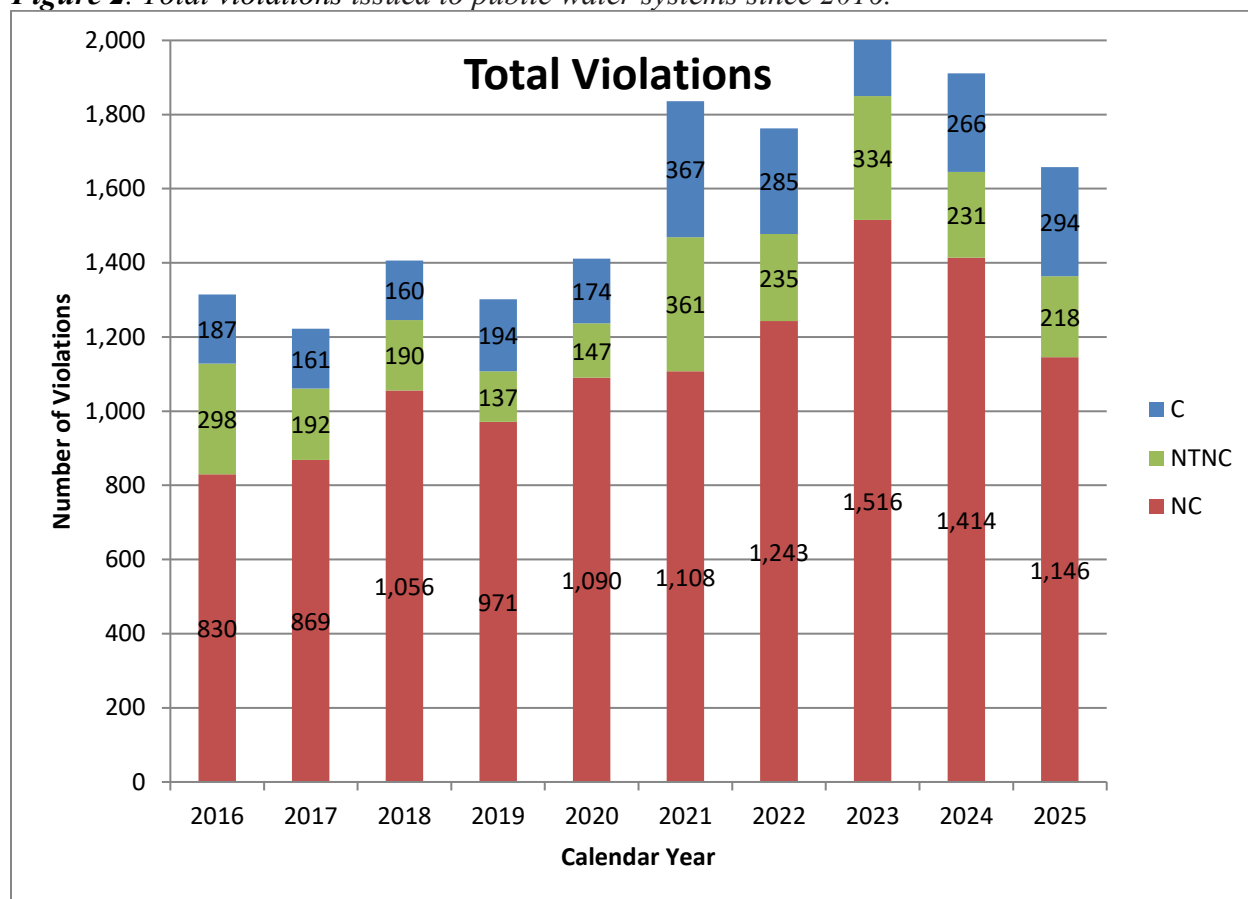
Violations are issued to PWS when the public water system does not meet all the regulations mandated by the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Health-based violations are issued when water sample results show the presence of contaminants(s) at numbers above a maximum contaminant level (MCL) or when a treatment technique requirement is not met. The MCL is set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and is based on human health and safety standards. The treatment techniques are specified processes intended to reduce the level of a contaminant.

Non-health-based violations are violations that are not directly related to human health and safety. These types of violations typically arise when PWS neglect to report water sample test results to the DWP, fail to test drinking water for a regulated contaminant, and/or fail to notify their customers of violations of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The following graphs show total violations, health-based violations, and non-health-based violations over the past 10 years.

Figure 2. Total violations issued to public water systems since 2016.

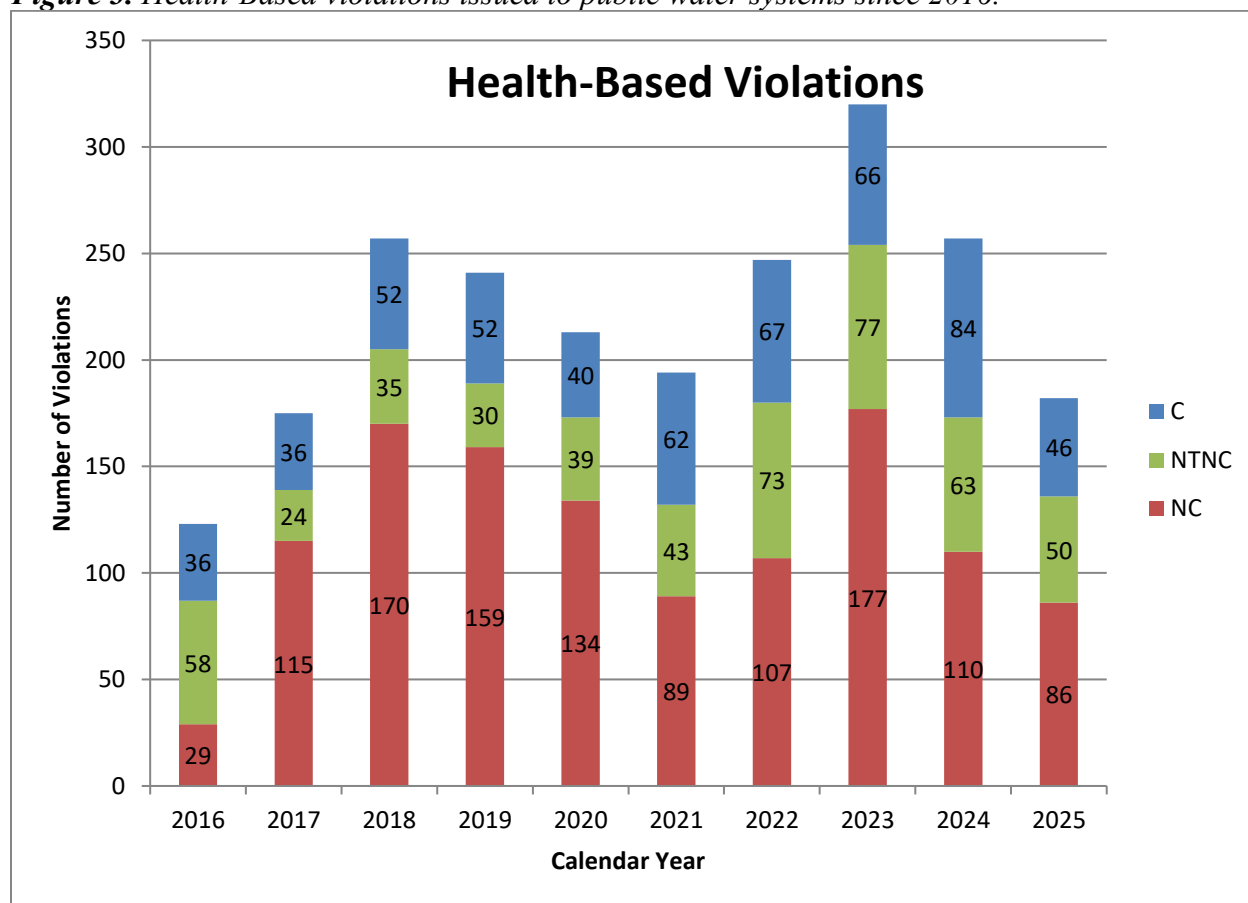


Community (C): A public water system that supplies water to the same population year-round (residential population).

Non-Transient, Non-Community (NTNC): A public water system that regularly supplies water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round. Some examples are schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals, which have their own PWS.

Transient, Non-Community (NC): A public water system that provides water in a place such as a restaurant or campground where people do not remain for long periods of time.

Figure 3. Health-Based violations issued to public water systems since 2016.

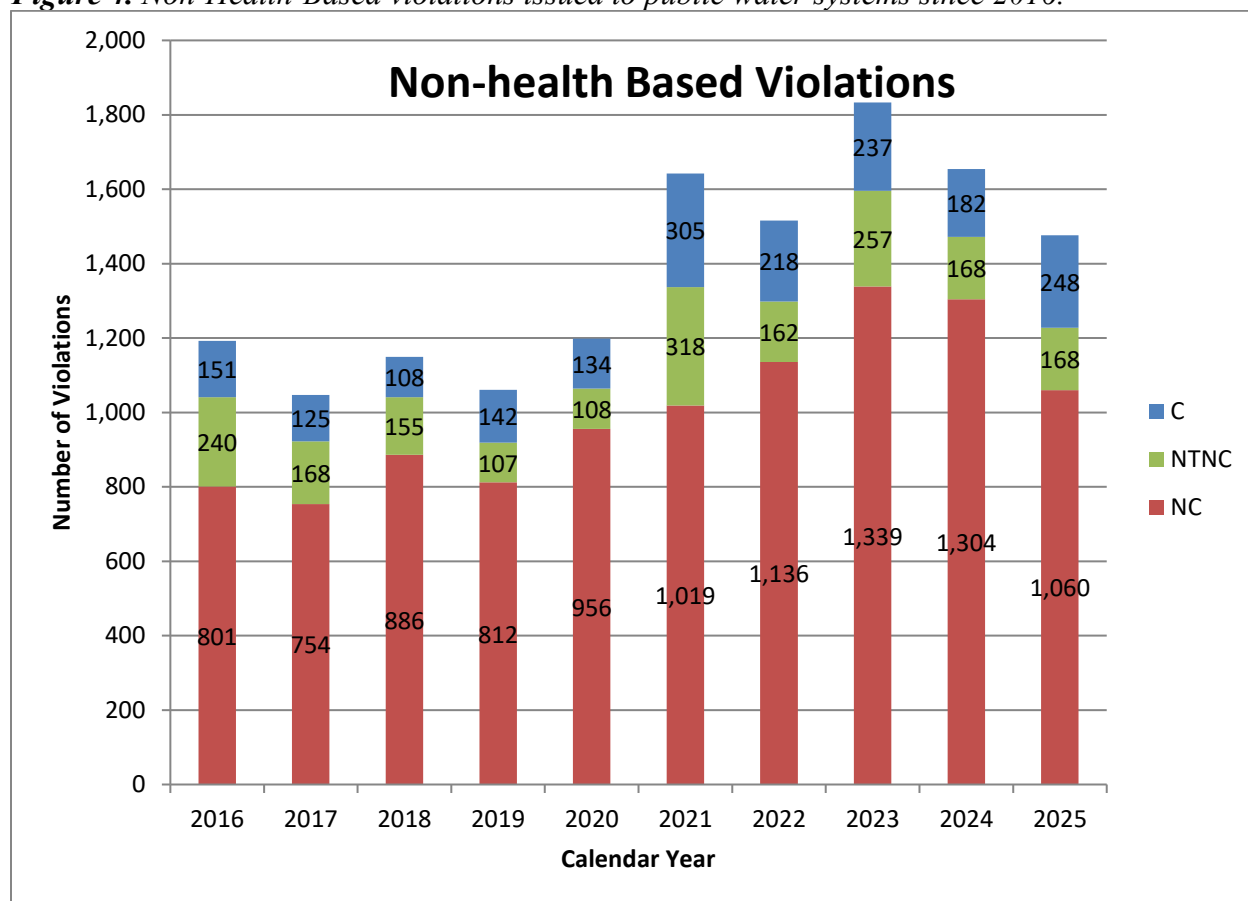


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Transient, Non-Community (NC): A public water system that provides water in a place such as a restaurant or campground where people do not remain for long periods of time.

Figure 4. *Non-Health-Based violations issued to public water systems since 2016.*



Community (C): A public water system that supplies water to the same population year-round (residential population).

Non-Transient, Non-Community (NTNC): A public water system that regularly supplies water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round. Some examples are schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals, which have their own public water systems.

Transient, Non-Community (NC): A public water system that provides water in a place such as a restaurant or campground where people do not remain for long periods of time.

Asset Management

The DWP has several activities to help promote and implement asset management to PWS.

Asset management with principal forgiveness

The DWP maintains an annual contract with a technical assistance provider to provide training and implementation assistance in asset management any time a system receives principal forgiveness from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). In these cases, both the system staff and trustees must attend an eight-hour asset management training. In cases where the system gets principal forgiveness more than once, they are required to go to training each time they receive principal forgiveness. Currently, the training is the same each year, but the

DWP may consider revising this in the future to be introductory training the first year and a more advanced or next steps training the next year.

DWSRF ranking criteria

The DWSRF program includes ranking criteria for asset management.

Capacity Development Grants

The Capacity Development Grants described earlier can be used for asset management.

Asset management training reimbursement

Asset management training is eligible for reimbursement as part of the Capacity Development Training Reimbursement Fund described earlier.

In addition to the activities from the DWP, there are partner organizations and stakeholders who provide asset management training and assistance. These activities enhance and complement the work of the DWP.

Conclusion

The DWP continues to assist PWS with improving technical, managerial, and financial capacity. The DWP works to ensure the provision of safe drinking water in Maine by administering and enforcing drinking water and subsurface wastewater regulations, providing education, as well as technical and financial assistance.

The existing structures and activities detailed in this report that enable progress toward capacity development will remain in effect. These approaches are proven and lend themselves well to enhancing capacity development.

The DWP loan and grant programs proved successful and will continue for as long as State and federal funding sources are available. PWS are appreciative of the funding assistance that they receive from the DWP, as this assistance allows them to undertake projects that they would not have been able to complete without these funding opportunities. During the reporting period, the DWP provided PWS with over 113.6 million dollars in loan and grant funding.

On-site technical assistance is important in helping PWS maintain and improve their technical, managerial, and financial capacity. 3,136 on-site visits were made to PWS across Maine by DWP staff and Maine Rural Water Association Water Quality Specialists during the reporting period. On-site visits ensure that infrastructure is adequate to provide clean and safe drinking water to consumers, operators and trustees understand their roles and responsibilities, and a public water system has adequate financial oversight to be a viable business. Most of Maine's PWS serve less than 500 people, and most violations are issued to these small PWS. Given that small PWS have very limited resources, the efforts of DWP staff and the Maine Rural Water Association Water Quality Specialists are critical in helping PWS understand the current regulations and how to properly operate and maintain their public water system.

Training is also important to ensure that water operators stay up to date with current regulations and technologies. Water operators are required to take training to renew their water operator licenses every two years. The DWP and other industry organizations strive to provide training that will build an operator's knowledge on the operation and maintenance of a public water system. All training must have a direct link to water quality, water supply, or protection of public health.

The progress over the past three years in improving public water system capacity has increased public health protection through helping PWS reliably serve safe drinking water. Safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water is fundamental to the well-being and the economic prosperity of communities across the State. The efforts of people who work every day to keep safe drinking water flowing to our homes and businesses extend lives, protect our communities, and make life more enjoyable.