



# WATER SUPPLY FORUM

*Serving Snohomish, King & Pierce Counties*

## **Public Information Plan**

**October 2025**

## Goals & Vision

The Water Supply Forum (WSF) has developed this Public Information Plan (PIP) as a critical component of supporting emergency management in the region. Its primary goal is to ensure accurate, timely, and actionable information reaches the public when it matters most, while also outlining response and recovery.

### GOALS:

1. **Protects Lives and Property:** Informs people how and where they can access safe drinking water during an emergency.
2. **Promotes Clear and Credible Communication:** Coordinates messaging across agencies to avoid confusion or conflicting information. Builds public trust by ensuring transparency and consistency.
3. **Manages Public Expectations and Emotions:** Provides reassurance that response efforts are underway. It also helps calm fears and reduce panic by offering reliable updates.
4. **Supports Emergency Response Operations:** Facilitates cooperation between the public and responders. Encourages compliance with emergency directives (e.g., curfews, quarantine).
5. **Combats Misinformation:** Monitors rumors and corrects false narratives quickly. Uses multiple platforms (e.g., social media, press releases, hotlines) and trusted partners to reach diverse audiences.
6. **Ensures Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Tailors messages for people with disabilities, non-English speakers, and other vulnerable groups. Uses formats that are accessible (e.g., visual aids, audio alerts).
7. **Provides Structure for Communication:** Outlines the roles and responsibilities of Public Information Officers (PIOs). Establishes protocols for media relations, digital communications, and community outreach.

## Utilizing the Public Information Plan (PIP)

The Public Information Plan is a communication plan to integrate accessibility and equity into the Water Supply Forum's emergency preparedness. The outlined structure will highlight the focus groups that require special attention due to socio-economic or other factors.

The PIP outlines external and internal resources that are needed to ensure the care and attention needed for the vulnerable populations specified in the PIP. Action taken by community partners and government officials is needed, and the PIP will guide them on specific actions that can be taken to support emergency preparedness and response.

The communications for the PIP are reflective of the vulnerable populations within the region. The strategies laid out offer guidance on how to communicate emergency plans, specific messaging, and translations that reflect the community members.

Within the PIP, tips on effective messaging and platforms also guide how to extend these communications to the appropriate populations and what needs to occur for this reach to happen. The PIP also outlines goals within each section, so users have a goal when imbedding PIP strategies and a means of measuring progress.

## Vulnerable Populations

A vulnerable person is less able to help themselves in the circumstances of an emergency and therefore requires special consideration in emergency planning and response.

Examples of vulnerable populations include the following:

- Older adults.
- People with disabilities.
- Children and pregnant persons.
- Individuals with chronic health conditions or pharmacological dependencies.
- People with limited English proficiency or low literacy.
- Unhoused populations or people in unstable housing.
- Persons with limited access to transportation.
- People with limited financial resources or a lower socio-economic status.

# Water Supply Forum

# Public Information Plan



## Consult Broadly with Local Leaders and Influencers

A critical strategy for those working in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery is to identify and connect with existing community structures and local networks. The community's ability to return to 'pre-disaster' functioning will be best supported by identifying and working with community leaders and champions. Those who held leadership roles at the time of the disaster will likely have local knowledge and connections that will prove invaluable to the recovery effort. In regional and rural areas, advice on identifying local leaders could be sought from a range of sources, including:

Group Types
Churches / Houses of Worship
Business Associations
Schools / Educational Institutions
Cultural Services
Libraries
Senior Citizen Centers
Neighborhood Watch Groups / Homeowners Associations
Nonprofit Organizations
Police/Emergency Services
Hospital / Health / Urgent Care / Community Services
Local Governments / Elected Officials
Community Leaders
Local Media Groups

## Consult Broadly with Local Leaders and Influencers

In cities and suburbs in the region, local community networks may be based more on ‘areas of shared interest’ rather than on geographic areas. However, the value of engaging with local leaders, who will resonate with the recovering community, is just as important. ‘Emergent’ leaders and groups are another common aspect of disaster recovery whose efforts and potential can represent a valuable resource, particularly when linked to existing community networks.

Convene water utilities, public health departments, community-based organizations, and emergency management agencies in the region to develop a unified notification plan that identifies roles, audiences, and feedback loop opportunities.

Map out resources—fact sheets, graphics, translation services, and sign-language interpreters—and designate liaisons for rapid message approval and dissemination. Use local jurisdictions and regional data to identify and map vulnerable groups at higher risk (e.g., elderly, unhoused, disabled, non-English speakers, low-income households, and communities with historical distrust of federal agencies). Develop GIS maps that show population clusters and access barriers.

Develop a dynamic, tiered listing of community partners that includes contact information and is categorized by capacity, geography, and the population they serve.

## Manage Expectations

Be mindful of over promising and raising the expectations of the affected community or recovery workers. Do not promise what cannot be delivered – no matter how well intentioned, this will lead to further disappointment and can erode trust within and between recovery services and communities in the region.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

To be successful, a public information and outreach campaign must be supported with sufficient resources. Public information and outreach should be a significant consideration when developing project budgets. Both internal agency resources and external resources can play a role in developing and implementing a public information and outreach campaign.

**Internal Resources** – Internal resources may include the project manager, public relations personnel from the Office of Communications, a graphic designer, and webmaster. Other resources include the use of providing traveler information online, changeable message signs, and posting project information on [wsdot.wa.gov](http://wsdot.wa.gov).

**External Resources** – External resources may include using consultants for additional public relations expertise (possibly in graphic design, web design, and writing); radio, TV, and newspaper advertising; printing brochures and pamphlets; or opening a project information center. Such costs can vary widely. Using low cost and/or free services can help stretch resources. External resources that can be free of charge include earned media and assistance from project partners.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Identify Partners/Stakeholders

Working with stakeholders in the planning and implementation stages of a public information and outreach campaign is important for the following reasons:

- **Establishing lines of communication.** Communication is particularly important during major periods of disruption and when changes occur.
- **Distributing information.** Involving outside groups in planning an outreach campaign is a way to distribute information. Holding meetings with the public to solicit community input is also a way to inform the public of disruptions and plans to mitigate them.
- **Improving the response effort.** Stakeholders will bring unique perspectives about successful types of messages and methods of communication. Varying perspectives may be important in areas with diverse population groups, for example, non-English speaking communities, unhoused populations, older adults, people with disabilities, people with limited transportation options, etc.
- **Sharing the costs.** Stakeholders may be willing to share the cost of producing materials or to provide free forms of advertising. For example, major employers are often willing to incorporate messages in company communications, such as newsletters, websites, or email.
- **Roles and Staffing.** Roles and responsibilities with regional emergency management and communications support staff should be detailed. The structure and division of work between various regional partners and staff needs to be clearly defined.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Possible Stakeholders and Interested Parties

Examples are noted below, but it is not limited to the following:

- American Red Cross
- City/County/State Governments
- City/County Utilities
- City/County Offices of Emergency Management
- Department of Ecology
- School Districts
- Regional/Local Fire Departments
- Health Departments
- Washington State Emergency Management Division
- Washington Department of Health (Drinking Water)
- Tribal Governments

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Develop Communication Campaign Framework

Define goals and objectives for the PIP Campaign:

- How do you define success?
- Determine approach, resources, and scope of outreach
- Define the outreach coordination team and necessary partners and define roles
- Identify the target audience
- Develop messages
- Develop brand themes and emergency related logos
- Determine general opportunities to distribute the messages (public meetings, peak commute times, direct mail, etc.)
- Develop draft plan to implement outreach strategies (specific actions, timelines, points of contact)
- Determine success criteria
- Validate communications plan and secure buy-in from key leaders, stakeholders, and the public

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Develop Campaign Messages

The communications plan should answer the following questions:

- How will the message be delivered?
- Who will deliver the message?
- When will the message be delivered?
- How often will the message be delivered?
- Which stakeholders will the message be delivered to?
- What kind of public involvement is needed?
- Who will translate messages in advance and in real-time during an emergency?
- Who will distribute the translated messages?
- How can we access translation resources, if needed?
- Are there communal translation resources?
- How can we accommodate public sign-language and ADA needs as part of water distribution methods?
- Minimally on every emergency, the standard communication tools should be used. These should include the following:
  - Press Release for Emergency Start
  - Elected Official Letter
  - The plan should also discuss emergency-specific communication tools and strategies to be deployed
  - For each strategy, the following information should be provided:
    - Target audience
    - Goals of information provided
    - Content (message)
    - Distribution channels to be used
    - Strategy action plan
      - Tasks involved in implementing the strategy
      - Start date & end date/times for each task
      - Resource allocation
      - Resource distribution
    - Contact information for responsible persons/groups

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Determine & Implement Outreach Strategies

Confirm outreach communication types and format requirements:

- Determine communication strategies to convey the messages (News, social media messages, brochures, website, radio ads, dynamic message signs, etc.)
- Identify audience for each product
- Confirm specific messages for each product
- Determine the design of the product
- Develop specific content of the response effort
- Produce outreach for response effort
- Confirm outreach opportunities/distribution channels and identify deadlines or special requirements (document this in the PIP)
- Match outreach products to specific distribution channels
- Continue to identify outreach partners and possible outreach opportunities
- Develop/maintain contact lists
- Distribute response effort messages through communication channels
- Leverage existing partners and make sure they are included in the plan

### Determine When to Communicate

A public information and outreach campaign should consider strategies to be implemented before a public emergency begins. Before the emergency starts, the campaign should concentrate on general information about the emergency, the problems it may cause, and how to find out more information. This might involve a range of outreach and communication methods, including working groups, planning and advisory groups, public workshops, regional websites, print media, governmental and regional briefings, and branding. Near the PIP campaign start date, it might be appropriate to add other methods of communication, such as free media coverage and paid advertising, a telephone hotline, or the use of dynamic message signs. After completion of the emergency, information can be provided regarding the successes of a regional response to the emergency, the successful distribution of emergency drinking water to vulnerable populations, and PIP campaign partners that can be publicly thanked. This is a chance to enhance the WSF image with a community-driven focus.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Public Awareness Strategies

- Branding
- Printed Materials
- Press Releases
- Media Alerts
- Mass Media
- Press Kit
- Business and/or Resident Survival Kit
- Emergency Website
- Emergency Centers
- Coordination with Media/Schools/Businesses/Emergency Services
- Community Taskforces
- Visual Information
- Radio Traffic News
- Changeable Message Signs
- Temporary Motorist Signs
- Emergency Hotlines
- Social Media
- Email Alerts
- Text Alerts
- Highway Information Network
- Message Organizational Maps (Stakeholders, Support Facts, Messages, Information Channels)

#### *Considerations:*

- Build a multi-lingual call center staffed 24/7
- Recruit community ambassadors to door-knock and distribute accessible materials
- Develop an accessible mobile app with offline maps and push-to-call feature
- Coordinate blind and deaf liaison teams to help with emergency drinking water distribution
- How do you combat misinformation? What is the right and true source of information to convey?

Implementing these templates and best practices will help ensure that during an emergency, no one is left uninformed or unsupported in the region.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Key Principles for Communicating with Vulnerable Populations

- Begin messages with the **most critical instruction** (evacuate, shelter in place, call for help)
- Use **plain language** and **short sentences**; avoid jargon
- Repeat messages on **multiple channels** (calls, texts, social media, radio, TV, door-to-door)
- Provide **specific resources** (exact potable drinking water access locations, addresses, phone numbers, website URLs)
- Ensure **accessibility** (translations, large print, pictograms, audio descriptions, captions, ASL)
- Engage **trusted messengers** (local faith leaders, community organizations)
- **Train staff and partners** in face-to-face and trauma-informed communication

### Tips for Effective Messaging

- Coordinate with **community partners** (senior centers, disability advocates, faith groups)
- Pre-register individuals with **special needs** for priority outreach
- Use **multimedia** (combine text, audio, visuals, and real-person voices)
- Test messages in advance with **focus groups** from each vulnerable cohort
- Provide updates **every 2–4 hours**, even to say “no change”

### Vulnerable Population Group Communication Preferences

- **Older Adults (65+)** - Automated voice call | Captions on TV
- **Children and/or Young Adults** – Mobile alerts | Social media platforms | Digital Apps | Interactive Maps
- **Unhoused Population**: Outreach teams and shelters; Loudspeakers / Mobile PAs
- **People with Limited Mobility** - SMS | Door-to-door voicemail
- **Limited English Proficiency** (Spanish Speaker) - Bilingual SMS | Ethnic radio stations
- **Low Literacy** - Flyer with icons | Automated audio
- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing** - Social media video (ASL + captions)
- **Visually Impaired** - Phone hotline | Radio bulletin
- **Chronic Medical Needs** - Direct phone call | Patient portals
- **Socially Isolated Individuals** - Neighbor network SMS | Door-hangers

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Sample Communication Messages

Have these sample communication messages ready and translated for emergency/recovery response.

#### ***Radio/Television Announcement:***

"Attention residents: Clean drinking water is now available at the temporary distribution point located at [Location Name]. This resource is free and prioritizes seniors, families with small children, and individuals with health conditions. Please bring your own containers if possible and check on neighbors who may need help. For more info, call [Hotline Number]."

#### ***Mobile Notification:***

"Emergency Alert: Drinking water available at [Location]. Priority: elderly, children, immunocompromised. Bring containers. Questions? Call [Hotline Number] or visit [Website]."

#### ***Community Flyers:***

##### SAFE DRINKING WATER AVAILABLE

Urgent support for those in need Water distribution: [Location, Dates & Times]

✓ Who: Elderly, children, those with medical needs

🧴 What to Bring: Your own containers

🚗 Transportation assistance: Call [Hotline]

#### ***Community Hotline Number:***

"Thank you for calling the emergency water support line. Yes, potable water is being distributed at [Location]. We prioritize vulnerable individuals. If you or someone you know needs assistance getting there, we're coordinating transportation. Would you like help with that?"

## Designing PIP Campaign Messages

### Develop Campaign Messages

The emergency messages on the following pages are recommended to be available in multiple languages. The selection of languages should reflect the local demographics of your residents.

#### Questions to Consider:

- How and who will translate the communications information or messages?
- What is the process, and who will be responsible?
- What mechanisms will you employ for quick distribution?
- What internal and/or external resources will you utilize?
- How do you prioritize and leverage messaging through trusted messengers—faith leaders, community advocates, mutual aid organizations, and local institutions—to combat misinformation and stigma?
- How do you avoid federal branding where trust is low in vulnerable populations?

#### Languages to Consider:

- **King County:** Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese
- **Pierce County:** Chinese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese
- **Snohomish County:** Chinese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog

## Designing PIP Campaign Messages

### Types of Campaign Messages – During Emergency

#### 1. Boil Water Advisory or Do Not Use Notice

Purpose: To inform the public if water is unsafe to drink, cook with, or bathe in.

Key Elements:

- Clear instructions (e.g., boil for 1 minute before use)
- Affected areas (maps or neighborhood names)
- Duration and updates on resolution
- Contact info for questions

#### **MESSAGE #1: Boil Water Advisory Issued for [Community Name]**

Due to [reason, e.g., a water main break], a **Boil Water Advisory** is now in effect for [specific area]. Residents should **boil all tap water for at least one minute** before drinking, cooking, or brushing teeth.

This advisory will remain in place until further notice. We are actively working to resolve the issue and will provide updates as they become available. For more information, visit [link] or call [hotline number].

#### 2. Emergency Water Distribution Information

Purpose: To guide residents on where and how to access safe drinking water.

Key Elements:

- Locations of water distribution centers
- Hours of operation
- Quantity limits per household
- Accessibility options (e.g., for elderly or disabled residents)

#### **MESSAGE #2: Emergency Water Distribution Available**

Safe drinking water is available for pickup at the following locations:

- [Location 1], [Address], Hours: [Time]
- [Location 2], [Address], Hours: [Time]

Each household may receive up to [amount] gallons per day. Please bring a valid ID and containers if possible. Home delivery is available for seniors and individuals with mobility challenges. Call [hotline] to request assistance.

## Designing PIP Campaign Messages

### Types of Campaign Messages

#### 3. Water Distribution Locations and Hours

Purpose: Ensure the public knows where and when they can access safe drinking water.

Key Details to Include:

- Exact addresses or landmarks of distribution points
- Operating hours and days
- Any changes due to weather or supply issues
- Accessibility info (e.g., drive-thru, walk-up, ADA access)

#### **MESSAGE #3: Water Distribution Locations and Hours**

Social Media Post:

Emergency Water Distribution Available

Safe drinking water is available at the following locations:

- Park – Address
- Community Center – Address

Open daily from 8 AM to 6 PM

Bring containers if possible. ADA-accessible stations are available.

#WSF #WaterAid

SMS Alert:

Water available at Park, 8AM–6PM daily. Bring containers. ADA access provided.

## Designing PIP Campaign Messages

### 4. Water Distribution Updates and Contact Information

Purpose: Keep the public informed of changes and provide ways to get help or ask questions.

Key Details to Include:

- Changes in distribution schedules or locations
- Restoration progress
- Emergency contact numbers or websites
- Social media handles or SMS alert sign-up

#### **MESSAGE #4: Updates and Contact Information**

"Water distribution at [Location] will close early today at 4 PM due to supply delays. For updates, follow @City/CountyEmergency on Twitter or call 555-123-4567."

Social Media Post:

Update: Water Distribution Schedule Change

Due to supply delays, Park water distribution site will close early today at 4 PM.

For updates, follow @WSFEmergency or call 800-123-4567.

Sign up for SMS alerts: Text WSF to 888-777

#StayInformed #WSFRelief

SMS Alert:

Park water site closes at 4PM today. Updates: @WSFEmergency or call 800-123-4567.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Evaluate Effectiveness

The following are sample goals, associated measures of effectiveness (MOE), and measurement tools:

**Goal:** Provide information about the project to educate communities that are most likely to be affected by the lack of water during an emergency.

**MOE:** Positive feedback from residents and businesses. Little to no reduction in business reported by local businesses. Delay on first day of emergency is less than projected. Average of less than X incidents per week.

**Tools:** Conduct weekly or bi-weekly resident/business surveys to determine if outreach efforts are sufficient and what outreach methodologies have been most useful.

**Goal:** Tell residents/businesses where they can go for more information throughout the duration of the emergency related to water distribution, particularly for vulnerable populations.

**MOE:** Number of website hits. Number of calls to project hotline. Number of emails.

**Tools:** Conduct weekly or bi-weekly resident/business surveys to learn if they are aware of the website and project hotline, and determine how they found out about these resources.

**Goal:** Encourage the use of alternate routes to water distribution sites.

**MOE:** Delay on first day of emergency is less than projected. Less than X complaints received per day on project hotline/website/email. Less than X incidents per week.

**Tools:** Measure traffic impacts on alternate route to determine if reduction in traffic/incidents through emergency results in motorists using prescribed alternates to access potable drinking water.

## Designing a PIP Campaign

### Evaluate Effectiveness

#### Questions to Consider:

- How well did we reach vulnerable populations?
- How was your reach measured? What specific KPIs/metrics were incorporated into your PIP campaign and outreach strategies?
- How did your PIP campaign advance equitable access for vulnerable populations in your area and/or community to access clean drinking water?
- How can you continue to build on what you learned from the previous emergency?

## Resources

- American Red Cross
- City/County/State Governments
- City/County Utilities
- City/County Offices of Emergency Management
- Department of Ecology
- School Districts
- Regional/Local Fire Departments
- Health Departments
- Washington State Emergency Management Division
- Washington Department of Health (Drinking Water)
- Tribal Governments