

# The Local Landscape

## Dear Municipal Leader:

I am pleased to offer you the second edition of EPA New England's Local Landscape. As this is the first newsletter since the Gulf Coast hurricanes—it is highly focused on emergency response and preparedness.

A study completed in mid-November by New York University found that most Americans are no better prepared for a disaster than they were before the hurricanes and are generally unaware of local response plans for disasters.

Recognizing that local government is on the critical front-line of any emergency response effort, we encourage you to continue to improve your emergency plans and capabilities. Most importantly, share information on your local disaster response plans with the citizens of your community.

We look forward to helping you achieve these goals and hope that you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Varney  
Administrator  
EPA New England Office

## An Inside Look at EPA's Hurricane Response Efforts



*Debris from Hurricane Katrina was estimated at 22 million tons—more than any American city produces in one year.*

EPA personnel and contractors were some of the first relief workers on the scene just before and immediately after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on August 29. EPA has over 1,200 employees and contractors cur-

rently working on the relief efforts, and EPA's New England office has sent almost 50 people to the region.

EPA's expertise was called upon to address issues including: chemical and oil contamination; water, air and sediment monitoring; performing wastewater and drinking water system assessments; setting up household hazardous waste collection and debris removal operations, and informing citizens of health and environmental concerns. Working with numerous other federal agencies and state and local emergency response personnel, relief efforts have been ongoing virtually around the clock since the Hurricanes struck.

Most people are unaware that because EPA was able to staff 67 boats during  
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## Safe and Secure Drinking Water

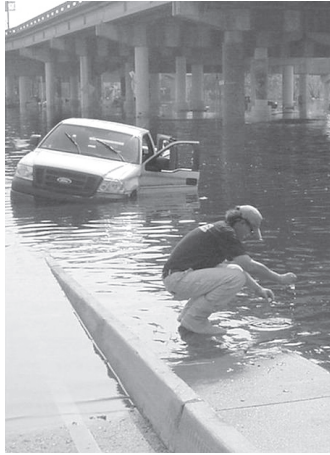
The matter of drinking water security has been taken seriously by community public water systems across New England. Nearly all community water utilities have assessed their vulnerabilities to terrorists or to other intentional acts of contamination, and have updated their emergency response plans. Recent events across the country have also shown us the importance of  
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# EPA's Hurricane Response Efforts

(cont.) the first days after Hurricane Katrina, the agency joined the priority effort of rescuing flood victims and taking them to safety. Second only to the Coast Guard, EPA personnel were responsible for saving between 800-1000 flood victims.

One of EPA's most critical missions was to help perform assessments of wastewater treatment plants and public drinking water systems. After the devastating hurricanes severely damaged or wiped out the infrastructure of numerous public works facilities, helping to bring these essential services back on line became one of the region's highest priorities. Currently, all but the hardest hit systems are operating in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Alabama.

Most people have read about the tremendous amount of debris that was left behind by the wrath of the hurri-



*EPA contractor sampling floodwaters several weeks after Hurricane Katrina struck.*

canes. EPA's largest task, and one that may continue for at least another year, is to support the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' debris removal, separation and recycling efforts.

The debris statistics are staggering: 360,000 cars; 60,000 boats; 350,000 refrigerators and other "white goods"; and millions of containers of household hazardous wastes

such as pesticides, bleach, paints and detergents. The amount of debris in the region is more than existing landfills can hold and more than any American city produces in one year—estimated at approximately 22 million tons.

To the greatest extent possible, response personnel are working to keep dangerous chemicals from the debris out of landfills. The Army Corps of Engineers with EPA's support has set up massive household hazardous waste

collection and disposal operations throughout the region and is working to remove freon from refrigerators, oil and gas from cars and boats and mercury from thermostats.

Most towns and parishes in the region removed the enormous amount of "green waste" (i.e., downed trees and branches) that blocked roads and landed in yards. Fire officials quickly set up makeshift high volume incinerators and burned most of the green waste. For more information, visit: [www.epa.gov/katrina/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/katrina/index.html)

## Free Mold Resources

*Flooding issues in New England and especially along the Gulf Coast have elevated mold as an issue of concern to local governments. In addition, publications on mold in schools and public buildings have been highly sought after by local officials visiting EPA's booth at municipal trade shows across New England. For a complete resource guide to mold, visit: [www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/moldresources.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/moldresources.html)*

## Emergency Response in Taunton, MA

Luckily, the Gulf Coast hurricanes had only minimal effects on New England's weather, although record rain this fall created several incidents that called federal, state and local emergency personnel into coordinated response actions. The near potential collapse of the Whittenton Pond Dam in Taunton, Mass. was one of the most serious incidents caused by the wet weather.

The Whittenton Pond Dam, a Civil War era wooden dam, was in serious danger of collapsing due to the unrelenting floods and rain in September and October. Fearing a catastrophic release of water from the pond, local officials ordered the evacuation of susceptible areas downstream includ-

ing most of downtown Taunton.

On October 18, one of EPA's on-scene-coordinators was deployed to Taunton and integrated into a unified Incident Management Team comprised of personnel from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local police and fire officials.

The emergency response team created a potential inundation map and plotted all of the EPA-regulated facilities that were using or storing hazardous materials. The at-risk facilities were contacted by MA DEP to ensure they were taking the appropriate steps to secure the materials.

One silversmith facility that straddles the Mill River directly downstream of the Dam, was of particular concern. EPA, MA DEP, and Taunton Fire Department personnel visited the facility and worked with employees to move hazardous material drums and containers to safer areas.

Several days later local officials began to pump water from the pond around the dam to relieve the pressure. Luckily, the rains subsided and the dam held—but the exemplary coordinated response ensured the protection of the citizens of Taunton and the integrity of the Mill River. Learn more about EPA New England's emergency response capabilities, visit: [www.epa.gov/ne/superfund/er/erindex.htm](http://www.epa.gov/ne/superfund/er/erindex.htm)

# The Power of Partnerships: Interagency Collaboration Can Make or Break an Emergency Response Effort

by Linda J. Colangelo

To recognize the value of community disaster response plans, look no further than the small town of Plainfield, a rural community of northeastern Connecticut, boasting four villages and a population of nearly 15,000. Three days of continuous news coverage put the town on the map this past spring when the abandoned InterRoyal Mill roared back to life in the form of a massive fire.

After supporting a variety of manufacturing businesses from textiles to furniture for nearly a century, the mill was abandoned in 1995 and became a regular target for vandalism. Residents grew increasingly worried over

the threat of a mill fire.

The EPA evaluated the 16.6-acre mill site in September 1995 and by November of the same year began removal of various contaminants including PCBs, cyanide, bulk chemical waste, transfer oils, and contaminated wood and asbestos.

In 2001, local health officials from the Northeast District Department of Health received a grant from the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) to conduct an environmental health education needs assessment at the InterRoyal Mill. This project led to increased

community awareness about the risks posed by the mill, greater interagency networking between federal, state, and local officials, and the development of a town evacuation plan in the vicinity of the mill.

All of those planning efforts revealed their value on the night of Tuesday, April 26, 2005, when the northern third of the mill was consumed by a spectacular blaze that burned for days and required the evacuation of some forty families. The fire also deposited potentially asbestos-contaminated debris over an area approximately five

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## Drinking Water

*(cont. from pg. 1)* security awareness and emergency preparedness in mitigating the harsh effects of other emergencies such as hurricanes, blackouts, and acts of vandalism. Quite simply, safe drinking water sustains life.

EPA New England believes that the job of water safety and security doesn't begin at the door of the water supplier. It takes a community to prepare for water emergencies. So let's do a quick check-in: Do you know about the vulnerabilities of your water systems? Do you know where your sensitive populations are within your community? Have you met with your water utilities to coordinate on emergency response plans? Have you shared 24/7 emergency contacts and numbers? Have you conducted a community-wide drinking water emergency drill? If the answer is 'no' to any one of the questions, we encourage you to follow our Top Ten Ways to Secure Drinking Water. ♣ *(see list at right)*

### Top Ten Ways to Secure Drinking Water

10. **Visit and tour** drinking water facilities, and help them identify critical customers
9. **Incorporate the utilities personnel** into the community's Incident Command System
8. **Inform** utilities of any potential threats or incidents
7. **Help** establish "Citizen Watches" for nearby drinking water facilities and sources
6. **Support** security upgrades for water utilities
5. **Include** utility facilities and water supplies in routine inspections and patrols
4. **Fully investigate** vandalism or tampering incidents at utility facilities
3. **Develop** communication plans including the utility's critical contact list
2. **Work** with utilities on vulnerability assessments
1. **Prepare** to respond to water emergencies by practicing your emergency drills

To get more information about the many tools and materials available to communities that support local efforts in securing water supplies and preparing for emergencies, visit [www.epa.gov/ne/homeland](http://www.epa.gov/ne/homeland)



# EPA Enforcement Focuses on Chemical Accident Prevention

In the wake of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes, and recent flooding in New Hampshire and Taunton, Mass., emergency responders relied heavily on chemical management databases for determining reconnaissance and response priorities. Having up-to-date and accurate information about chemical storage and releases is not just an important environmental concern, it is vital for national security and the health and welfare of citizens that live near the facilities.

Five recent EPA legal actions have focused on chemical emergency response and prevention. As a result of the cases, the facilities face penalties and have spent more than \$1.5 million in safety improvements.

EPA's legal actions were taken against the following MA and NH companies:

- Crystal Warehouse Corporation, Wilmington, MA, which stores hydrofluoric acid, agreed to pay \$17,973 to settle claims that it violated federal chemical inventory reporting regulations.

- On September 23, EPA issued a complaint proposing that Nova Chemicals, Indian Orchard, MA, pay \$39,663 for alleged violations found during an investigation of a 2004 chemical accident that released 4,500 pounds of styrene monomer to the environment.

- On September 30, EPA sought a \$113,640 penalty from Callahan Chemical Company, Walpole, MA, for its failure to prevent and mitigate two releases of acetone. Among other things, EPA found the company failed to notify the Local Emergency Planning Committee of the release.

- Northeast Refrigerated Terminals, Middleboro, MA, agreed on September 27, 2005 to pay \$18,045 and spend an additional \$30,000 to make environmental improvements after anhydrous ammonia was released from a faulty valve at the facility in April 2004.

EPA's complaint cited the company for its failure to: have a risk management program; notify the National Response Center of the release; and file required chemical inventory forms.

- OSRAM SYLVANIA Products, Exeter, NH, agreed to pay \$14,000 to

settle claims that it violated federal clean air and chemical release notification rules after an accidental release of hydrofluoric acid in May 2003.

To view the press release on this topic visit: [www.epa.gov/region1/pr/2005/nov/sr051102.html](http://www.epa.gov/region1/pr/2005/nov/sr051102.html)

## Interagency Collaboration (cont.)



*InterRoyal Fire - April 26, 2005 / Photo by Robert Kerr*

(cont. from pg. 3) miles long by one-half mile wide. In addition to 22 fire companies, dozens of federal, state, regional, and local agencies responded to the fire, each bringing an important solution to the emergency response effort.

The EPA worked around the clock with these officials to keep accurate information flowing between agencies, and to develop important messages for the community.

The lessons learned in Plainfield may have far-reaching effects. As a result of the InterRoyal blaze, Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell has ordered the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to gather detailed information on nearly 75 aban-

doned mills in the state.

“Fire at the InterRoyal mill site wasn’t a case of if; it was when,” said Patricia Beckenhaupt, Director of Health for NDDH. “Thanks to prudent action and positive partnerships early on, plans were in place and officials knew what to do. EPA Administrator Robert Varney is right on target in urging local officials to focus on emergency plans and capabilities. In times of crisis, constituents will seek out trusted authorities. Municipal leaders must be ready.” ♣

*Linda J. Colangelo is the Public Information Officer for the Northeast District Department of Health and served as a lead spokesperson during the fire.*

# Safe Winter Roads and the Environment

With a little training and some inexpensive new tools, road crews can help save money, reduce environmental damage, and most importantly, save lives.

**Use the Right Material:** Most towns in New England use a mixture of sand and salt on their roads. Towns like sand because it has a low up-front cost and is perceived to be environmentally friendly. Studies have shown though, that sand is ineffective except in a handful of low-speed situations. Sand must be removed from catch basins and curbs and properly disposed of after the winter is over, which is an expensive proposition for even the smallest town. Furthermore, sand contributes to both air and water pollution.

**Use the Right Amount:** The number one factor in knowing how much salt to apply is the surface temperature of the road, which can be 20 degrees different from the air temperature. With

salt prices increasing by almost 50% last year, using the appropriate amount of salt is good for the environment and the bottom line. DPWs that invest in some inexpensive infrared thermometers for their trucks often find they pay off in just one storm. Along with properly calibrated spreaders, these thermometers are the most effective salt reduction tools.



Get a copy of EPA's *Winter Roads Fact Sheet* at: [www.epa.gov/ne](http://www.epa.gov/ne)

**Apply it at the Right Place:** A shaded section of road may need more salt than a non-shaded area, just as bridges may need to be treated differently. Hills and curves need special attention as well.

**Apply it at the Right Time:** "Get out early," says John Wilson, Highway Operations Supervisor in Concord, MA. Concord, which has an aggressive anti-icing policy, starts applying salt and other chemicals well before the first flakes fly. This keeps snow from bonding with the pavement, and gives it a mealy, easy-to-plow consistency. Not only does the town use less salt than it did before anti-icing, but it has seen savings in labor and fuel and an improvement in customer satisfaction. For more information, visit: [www.epa.gov/adminweb/naturalevents/snow-ice.html#highways](http://www.epa.gov/adminweb/naturalevents/snow-ice.html#highways)

## Directory of Watershed Resources

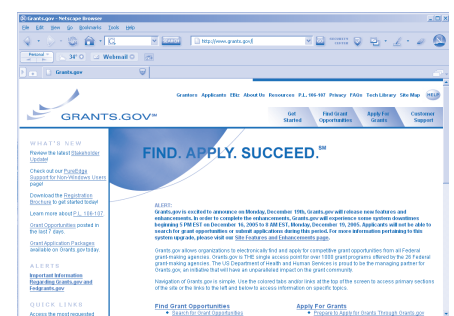
The New England Environmental Finance Center (NEEFC) offers an on-line Directory of Watershed Resources. The directory is a free, searchable database of environmental funding programs and other support. It provides up-to-date information on assistance available from federal and state government, private foundations, corporations and other organizations. The directory includes nearly 300 programs with a New England focus in addition to over 320 national funding/assistance sources. Programs listed in the directory support a wide range of environmental activities including watershed restoration, land conservation, water and wastewater projects, capacity building

**This directory includes nearly 300 programs with a New England focus.**

and education. The NEEFC is a university-based research, education, and public service program aimed at helping EPA's constituencies find financially successful approaches to environmental improvements. *NEEFC is housed within the Muskie School of the University of Southern Maine in Portland, and is part of a network of nine EPA-supported centers distributed throughout the country that focus on environmental financing issues.* For more information on the Watershed Directory or Plan2Fund, or about NEEFC in general, contact Will Johnston, 207-228-8356, or [wjohnston@usm.maine.edu](mailto:wjohnston@usm.maine.edu)

## Financial Assistance for Local Governments

Grants.gov allows organizations to electronically find and apply for competitive grant opportunities from all Federal grant-making agencies, including EPA. Grants.gov is the single access point for over 1,000 grant programs offered by the 26 federal grant-making agencies.



# Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt Announces Local Flu-Planning Summits

Federal Health officials announced on December 5 that pandemic influenza-planning meetings will be held in all 50 states over the next four months to help bolster national preparedness for a possible outbreak of deadly avian flu. HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt announced the plan at a national conference where health officials were fine-tuning community-response plans for the influenza threat. Because local communities will bear the brunt of pandemic flu response efforts, Leavitt urged all

segments of the community to develop plans to address such issues as absenteeism, work stoppages, and shortages of resources. For more information, visit: [www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/convening.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/convening.html)

EPA New England has been reaching out to state and local drinking water operators and other environmental service professionals on this important issue. For more information on this issue, contact Sheryl Rosner in EPA NE's public affairs office at: [rosner.sheryl@epa.gov](mailto:rosner.sheryl@epa.gov)

## EPA New England Local Government Office

EPA New England  
1 Congress Street  
Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02114-2023  
(617) 918-1021  
(fax) (617) 918-0021  
[gutro.doug@epa.gov](mailto:gutro.doug@epa.gov)

### Editor

Douglas Gutro

### EPA Contributors


Christopher Orlando, Sheryl Rosner,  
Dave Deegan and Jane Downing

### Northeast District Department of Health

Linda Colangelo

EPA-901-N-05-003

December 2005

 printed on 100% recycled paper, with a minimum of 50% post-consumer waste, using vegetable based inks



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Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02114

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