

Fact Sheet

DIVISION OF DRINKING WATER

Program Action



Background

Implementation of the 2020 Safe Drinking Water Plan (2020 Plan) focuses on recommendations necessary to achieve compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, in recognition that safe drinking water is fundamental to the health of all communities in California. The 2020 plan contains recommendations for public water systems, which are grouped into four thematic areas: Sustainability, Equity/Human Right to Water, Emergency Preparedness, and Program Action.


The Program Action recommendations focus on the need for the State Water Board to further collaborate and take action with public water systems, stakeholders, interested parties, and the public to identify desired outcomes and achieve common goals. Consistent with the scope of the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) drinking water program, the focus of the 2020 plan has been broadened to include public health considerations for state small water systems and private domestic wells.

Agencies working with public water systems

In California, public water systems are regulated collaboratively by different state and local agencies. The State Water Board is responsible for implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act in California. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulates investor-owned systems; Local Environmental Health Jurisdictions (LEHJ) regulate small public water systems; and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) regulates drinking water within mobile home parks. Additionally, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the Secretary of State, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and the Department of Real Estate (DRE) are involved in activities that impact public water systems.

Continued cooperation and coordination between agencies will lead to more consistent regulation of public water systems, as well as improvements in water quality protection, water supply reliability, and enforcement of laws and regulatory requirements. The differences in varying regulatory requirements of the respective agencies that affect drinking water should continue to be addressed to create more equitable regulation.





Recent programmatic actions by the State Water Boards

SB 200 (2019) and AB 2501 (2018): established and funded the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) drinking water program and enhanced the state's authority to mandate consolidations, respectively. Consolidation is the joining of two or more water systems, usually with a smaller system being absorbed into a larger water system. Consolidations are an effective way to increase a water system's capacity to ensure customers can receive safe and affordable water reliably.

The SAFER drinking water program is designed to ensure Californians who lack safe, adequate, and affordable drinking water receive it as quickly as possible, and that the public water systems, state small water systems, and domestic wells serving them establish solutions that will stand the test of time. In doing so, SAFER minimizes the disproportionate environmental burdens experienced by some communities and advances justice for people of all incomes, races, and cultures.

Consolidations for mobile home parks may not be feasible if a mobile home park does not meet the state's Waterworks Standards, which provide criteria for the design, construction, and operation of public water systems. The Department of Housing and Community Development's construction standards require mobile home parks to comply with the state's uniform building codes when developing their water distribution systems, and those requirements are less stringent than the Waterworks Standards. The State Water Board is working with the Department of Housing and Community Development to resolve these discrepancies to help customers receive safe drinking water.

The State Water Board is working to increase transparency by sharing financial and water quality data, updates on program funding, and information about our collaboration with other state agencies. Doing so gives the public and stakeholders the information they need to ask questions and give feedback, resulting in better outcomes.

Top Three Program Action Recommendations

The 2020 Safe Drinking Water Plan identified [23 recommendations](#) for program action; below are the top three recommendations:

1. The State Water Board will continue to work closely with Department of Housing and Community Development to develop a coordinated strategy to address water quality and supply in mobile home parks, special occupancy parks, and employee housing.
2. The State Water Board will coordinate with local, county, and city planning departments, Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and Local Environmental Health Jurisdictions (LEHJ), to coordinate elements of the SAFER drinking water program and to identify:
 - 1) Areas that may be at a higher risk of groundwater contamination;
 - 2) Areas currently developed without safe drinking water, to determine where community services districts or county service areas could be created or where other actions could be taken, and
 - 3) Areas where new development or issuance of new building permits should be postponed until access to safe and reliable drinking water is identified.
3. Increase engagement with county and state land-use planners to develop county-wide drinking water plans. Plans could be done through required water sections of existing documents such as county general plans, or other more specific drinking water plans.

For additional information on equity and the human right to water, visit:

[SAFER Drinking Water Program | California State Water Resources Control Board](#)
[California Department of Housing and Community Development](#)
[Home | California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment \(ca.gov\)](#)
[California Public Utilities Commission](#)
[Department of Water Resources \(ca.gov\)](#)
[California Department of Real Estate](#)
[2020 Safe Drinking Water Plan- Chapter 2, Current Regulations of Drinking Water](#)
[2020 Safe Drinking Water Plan- Chapter 12, 2020 Implementation](#)

For questions regarding emergency preparedness, contact:

Division of Drinking Water, Technical Operations Section at DDW-TechOps@waterboards.ca.gov or (619) 525-4021