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STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
LANSING



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TO: Management of Large Public Water and Wastewater Systems

FROM: Robert Babcock, Chief, Water Sector Security and Emergency Management  
Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance  
Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) REB

DATE: January 15, 2013

SUBJECT: Tabletop Exercises (TTX) at large public water and wastewater systems

Patriot Services, Inc., of Commerce, Michigan has been selected as contractor to perform Tabletop Exercises (TTX) at the largest 75 drinking water and largest 25 wastewater systems in Michigan.

#### I. Contract

This contract is funded by the Counterterrorism Grant from US EPA which was awarded to Michigan as a result of the passage of the Bioterrorism Act of 2002 which amended the Safe Drinking Water Act.

During 2013, tabletop exercises are planned to be conducted at the largest 75 drinking water and largest 25 wastewater plants.

If you are contacted by the contractor (Robert House, Project Manager) about performing a TTX at your facility, please accept this as an opportunity for your community drinking water or wastewater system.

The intent of the TTX is for your community to increase its understanding of the importance and the impact of the public drinking water and wastewater system on the entire community and to support planning and capitalization of improvement projects, e.g., interconnects and emergency generators, for the system to improve resilience to all hazards.

A TTX is a half day event, morning or afternoon, in which the utility invites to their facility its partners in the community, e.g., fire, police, hospital, large industries, public health, to discuss a destructive scenario led by the contractor which focuses on their system and response.

#### II. Background

Public water and wastewater utilities (utilities) have historically developed and maintained emergency contingency plans which were responsive to system outages due to weather related incidents and acts of vandalism. As a result of the terrorist's attacks which occurred on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and subsequent global climate change events, utilities need to consider all hazards including weather events

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and malevolent acts of terrorism as potential problems the utilities may encounter and incorporate such acts into emergency contingency plans. TTXs are a method of incorporating all hazards and malevolent acts of terrorism into local emergency responsiveness planning.

Community water and wastewater officials need to be a part of the police, fire, and hospitals' emergency management and response activities. The community water and wastewater systems are key assets of the community's critical infrastructure and local officials need to be active partners in working together to protect their systems with an all hazards approach.

Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) and Contingency Plans (CPs) are only as good as they are developed and used. TTXs will provide information and experience that the community and non-community water and wastewater systems can use in continuing the TTX process on an annual basis.

Michigan has approximately 1,500 public water systems and approximately 500 public wastewater systems. Engaging a Contractor to perform TTXs at all 2,000 public water and wastewater systems is not realistic. As a result, DEQ will perform 100 TTXs on a highest population priority basis. CPs and ERP's need to be used and revised on a routine basis, e.g., annually, in order for them to be current and useful. TTXs are useful in updating and maintaining appropriate responsiveness to the public utility in the event of an all hazards utility outage including a malevolent act.

Climactic events, e.g., superstorms, have the potential to severely damage utilities. Emergency management and planning, e.g., TTX participation, can reduce delays and assist in successful response. You do not want to be meeting your partners during an actual event.

The TTXs are voluntary and operated on a no fault basis. Tours of facilities after the completion of the exercise may occur after the exercise, if deemed appropriate by the owner of the community water or wastewater system.

Thank you for your service to your community and your constant vigilance in protecting your community and its public drinking water or wastewater system.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at my email address at [babcockr@michigan.gov](mailto:babcockr@michigan.gov) or mail at P.O. Box 30241, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7741 or your DEQ district office.

cc Mr. Steve Burton, DNR  
Ms. Liane Shekter-Smith, DEQ  
Mr. William Creal, DEQ