

# EMERGENCY AND IMMINENT COMMUNITY WATER ASSISTANCE GRANTS (ECWAG)

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Those of you who have worked with USDA Rural Development in the past are probably most familiar with our Water and Environmental Program (WEP). This is our most popular program that provides low interest loans and grants to construct, extend, or improve water and wastewater systems in rural communities. We actually offer several other programs that assist communities and I wanted to take the time here to focus on our Emergency and Imminent Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG) program.

The ECWAG program is designed to assist residents of rural areas that have experienced a significant decline in quantity or quality of water as a result of an emergency (having occurred within two years of the date of application), or in which such a decline is considered imminent.

An **emergency** is defined as an occurrence of an incident such as, but not limited to a drought; earthquake; flood; tornado; hurricane; disease outbreak; or spills, leakage, or seepage of hazardous substances or chemicals.

A **significant decline in quality** of potable water occurs when the present community source or delivery system does not meet, as a result of an emergency, the current Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) requirements. For a private source or delivery system a significant decline in quality occurs when the water is no longer potable as a result of an emergency. The term significant decline in quality may also include a situation where a significant decline is likely to occur within one year from the date of filing an application.

A **significant decline in quantity** is caused by a disruption of the potable water supply by an emergency. The disruption in quantity of water prevents the present source or delivery from supplying potable water needs to rural residents. This would not include a decline in excess water capacity. The term significant decline in quantity may also include a situation where a significant decline is likely to occur within one year from the date of filing an application.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

- Public bodies serving rural areas (population of less than 10,000).
- Not-for-profit organizations.
- Native American tribes on Federal or State reservations or

other federally recognized tribes.

- Rural area must have a Median Household Income (MHI) of less than \$56,882.

## HOW CAN FUNDS BE USED?

- Waterline extensions from existing systems.
- Construction of new waterlines.
- Repairs to an existing system.
- Significant maintenance to an existing system.
- Construction of new wells, reservoirs, transmission lines, treatment plants, and other sources of water.
- Equipment replacement.
- Connection and/or tap fees.
- Project expenses, such as legal, engineering, and environmental fees.

## HOW MUCH ASSISTANCE CAN A COMMUNITY RECEIVE?

- Up to \$500,000 for projects that will alleviate a significant decline in quantity or quality of water. This generally pertains to water source projects (i.e. wells, treatment plant, water tank, transmission line associated with water source, etc.)
- Up to \$150,000 for repairs, partial replacement, or significant maintenance on an established system that will remedy an acute shortage or significant decline in the quality or quantity of potable water. This includes repairs or replacement of distribution lines, pumps, damaged equipment, etc.

## HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Applicants may contact our local Area Offices to discuss potential projects. Visit our website at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/NYHome.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/NYHome.html) to find out what office serves your county.

The ECWAG regulations have recently been updated and simplified by our Agency. This has reduced the paperwork, increased processing turnaround time, and will help us better assist communities impacted by natural disasters and emergencies. We are currently accepting applications, so please submit your application now. Your comments and/or questions are always welcome. Please feel free to contact me at (315) 477-6465 or [titus.falkenburg@ny.usda.gov](mailto:titus.falkenburg@ny.usda.gov). 💧💧💧