

To: Chairman Arnett and members of the Public Works Commission
22, 2025
From: Peter Hartz – Water Systems Manager

October

Re: October 28, 2025, Public Works Commission agenda items

Water Systems:

Review and take possible action Enter into agreement with City of Waukesha Fire Department and City of Watertown Fire Department for specialized emergency response services.

Background:

Watertown Water Systems disinfects its drinking water using pure chlorine gas. Currently, self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) units are not stored outside the chlorine rooms at any of the three treatment plants. A recent review with Fire Chief Reynen revealed that there is no formal agreement with the City of Watertown Fire Department to respond to a chlorine gas release.

To maintain a safe workplace and ensure compliance with state safety requirements, it is necessary to establish specialized emergency response support in the event of a chlorine gas leak or a confined space rescue.

Wisconsin Administrative Code Reference – NR 811.48(7):

When chlorine gas is used, the code requires respiratory protection equipment (NIOSH-approved gas masks with compressed air and at least 30-minute capacity) to be readily available outside chlorine storage rooms. The equipment must be compatible with that used by the local fire department. Alternatively, for installations using 150-pound cylinders, an agreement with the local fire department that has appropriate gas masks and capabilities may be approved by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Current Conditions:

- Water Department staff are prohibited from entering a building during a chlorine gas leak.
- Maintaining SCBA equipment on site would not align with our safety policies.
- The Watertown Fire Department is not trained or equipped to enter a chlorine-contaminated environment, or a confined space.
- In the event of a leak, a mutual aid request would be required for the Waukesha Fire Department HAZMAT Team.

Watertown Water Systems maintains comprehensive Emergency Management Plans for all three water treatment plants. These plans are on file with Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) and the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) and meet off-site planning requirements. However, the current plans list incorrect response agencies, including the Watertown Fire Department and county-level responders. The new agreement will update these emergency response plans to accurately reflect the appropriate specialized response team.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

As listed by Dodge and Jefferson County Emergency Management, available PPE includes safety glasses, boots, gloves, helmets, face shields, and goggles. SDS recommendations also include protective clothing and quick-drench or eyewash facilities for potential contact with cold or evaporating chlorine.

Chlorine Stored On-Site:

- West Treatment Plant: 750 lbs (5 × 150-lb cylinders)
- Central Treatment Plant: 750 lbs
- Northeast Treatment Plant: 750 lbs

Financial Impact: The proposed mutual aid agreement will cost \$9,144 annually.

Recommendation: Approve the mutual aid agreement between the City of Watertown, City of Waukesha Fire Department, and Watertown Water Systems for specialized emergency response to chlorine gas and confined space incidents.

Sincerely,

Peter Hartz

Water Systems Manager