

# DRINKING WATER SAFETY PLANS

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## KEY MESSAGES FOR DECISION MAKERS

- Drinking water safety plans (DWSPs) can support good water management practices and community health.
- Decision-makers, government agents and other stakeholders have a role to play in supporting DWSP implementation over both the short and long term.
- Community readiness is a factor in DWSP success.



## WHO IS THIS INFORMATION RELEVANT FOR?

The information is relevant for decision-makers and managers at the municipal level as well as water regulators, consulting engineers and planners, small systems operators, Aboriginal organizations, and provincial government agencies.

## WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH FOCUS?

The province of Alberta is the first to implement drinking water safety plans (DWSPs), a proactive approach for managing risks in a drinking water supply. The research team examined the challenges associated with implementing DWSPs in small communities (those serving fewer than 5,000 people).

## WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH METHOD?

The research team conducted face-to-face, in-depth interviews with water operators and decision-makers in communities across Alberta. A community readiness assessment was carried out in eight of these communities.

## WHAT WERE THE RESEARCH RESULTS?

The team found that DWSP implementation is facilitated by strong communication and trust between key stakeholders. However, communities vary in their readiness to implement new water policies and this readiness gap can undermine the intended, positive outcome of a DWSP approach.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS?

Alberta's DWSP presents a practical option for effective water management and requires minimal adjustment in order to customize the current model to suit almost any jurisdiction in Canada or elsewhere. A DWSP facilitates record keeping, which will benefit future generations of operators and decision-makers alike. Providing operators with adequate training, time, and resources to complete and maintain a DWSP is essential to its success.

In addition, much of the success of a DWSP approach hinges on mutual respect, clear communication and an organizational structure that prioritizes water supply safety. Regulators, decision-makers, and operators need to work together to make sure DWSPs are being successfully implemented, recognizing that not all communities may be immediately 'ready' to do so and may require additional support.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT GRAHAM GAGNON, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, [WATER@DAL.CA](mailto:WATER@DAL.CA) OR HEATHER CASTLEDEN, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, [HEATHER.CASTLEDEN@QUEENSU.CA](mailto:HEATHER.CASTLEDEN@QUEENSU.CA)