



**For immediate release:**

*Friday, August 28, 2020*

**Contact:** *Jerome Hand*

*jhand@adem.alabama.gov*

*(334) 260-4545*

## **ADEM Gets Grant to Help Water Systems During Emergencies**

*Funds will be used to buy generators and expand emergency communication system*

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - The Alabama Department of Environmental Management applied for and was awarded a \$340,754 grant by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that will enable ADEM to better respond to hurricanes and other natural disasters. The grant will be used to buy generators and expand an emergency communication system.

“This grant will aid the Department in its response to individuals, regulated entities and local governments,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. “It will help us both respond in a more timely manner during emergency situations and assist in hurricane preparedness. The generators and communications improvement will also assist municipal water systems in emergencies.”

Hurricane Laura, which roared onto the Louisiana coast on Wednesday as a Category 4 storm, illustrated the need for public utilities, especially water and sewage treatment systems, to be prepared for natural disasters and to be able to communicate with authorities, regulators and residents in their aftermath. The funds will aid ADEM’s emergency response efforts and field presence through enhanced communication capabilities, leading to quicker response times.

The EPA awarded the funds as part of the Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act. It was passed in response to Hurricane Michael, which struck south Alabama in October 2018. Michael caused flooding and inflicted major damage to property, infrastructure and wastewater utilities. Excessive rainfall and loss of power during the storm resulted in sanitary sewer overflows. Geneva, Henry, Houston and Mobile counties incurred the most damage.

With the grant, ADEM will be able to provide three generators to assist wastewater treatment systems during power outages that result from hurricanes, storms and other emergency situations. These generators will be provided to the Alabama Rural Water Association (ARWA) to expand their fleet for use by utilities during emergencies

ADEM will also use a portion of the funds to expand GroupCast, a service that uses telephone calls, texts, emails and social media to contact area residents in times of emergencies and for educational reminders. The system has proved successful in rapidly connecting with water systems in emergency situations. ADEM plans to expand this service to cover municipal wastewater treatment systems, enabling the Department to more quickly make contact with the systems before, during and after natural disasters.

“This will help us better communicate with the water systems and other governmental agencies when communication is critical,” LeFleur said. “These partnerships with water systems and the citizens they serve will result in better protection of our water sources and assist us in our mission to safeguard Alabama’s environment.”

**[adem.alabama.gov](http://adem.alabama.gov)**

#