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Austin Water Lifts Boil Water Notice

Mandatory Water Use Restrictions Remain in Place for Outdoor Watering

AUSTIN- Austin Water has lifted the boil water notice that has been in place since Monday, Oct. 22, 2018. Customers no longer need to boil water used for drinking, cooking and making ice. Water quality testing submitted to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has confirmed that tap water meets all regulatory standards and is safe for human consumption.

On October 23, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) required Austin Water, Public Water System ID#TX227001, to issue a Boil Water Notice to inform customers, individuals, or employees that due to conditions which occurred recently in the public water system, the water from this public water system was required to be boiled prior to use for drinking water or human consumption purposes.

The public water system has taken the necessary corrective actions to restore the quality of the water distributed by this public water system used for drinking water or human consumption purposes and has provided TCEQ with laboratory test results that indicate that the water no longer requires boiling prior to use as of October 28.

If customers have questions concerning this matter, they may contact City of Austin 3-1-1, visit austintexas.gov/BoilH2O or follow @austinwater on social media.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has allowed the following Austin Water wholesale customers to lift their boil water notices: City of Rollingwood, City of Sunset Valley, Creedmoor Maha WSC, High Valley WSC, Marsha WSC, Mid-Tex Utility, Morningside Subdivision, Nighthawk WSC, Northtown MUD, North Austin MUD, Rivercrest Water System, Travis County WCID #10, and Wells Branch MUD.

Background

Historic flooding on the Llano River poured unprecedented amounts of dirt, silt and debris into the Highland Lakes, the source of the City's water supply. The flood waters significantly affected the clarity, known as turbidity, of the water in lakes Travis and Austin from which Austin draws its water. Typical levels of turbidity in the raw water from those lakes are around 5 NTU. (NTU is the measure of turbidity of the water.) As the flooding continued, turbidity readings peaked above 400 NTU in those lakes. With turbidity levels 80 times typical conditions, much more time was required for water filtration at the City's three water treatment plants, which significantly reduced the amount of water that Austin Water could produce for customers. Water levels in storage reservoirs were eventually drawn down to minimal levels and the risk of water shortages increased.

In response, Austin Water on Monday, Oct. 22 implemented mandatory water-use restrictions, urged customers to limit water use to basic needs, and issued a precautionary boil water notice. On Wednesday, Oct. 24, Austin Water announced that the boil water notice was mandatory because the turbidity standard for treated water within one treatment plant temporarily exceeded the state standard.

As the week continued, conditions on the lakes began to improve and water use by customers began to reduce. Turbidity levels of raw water from lakes Travis and Austin were ranging from 50 to 100 by Saturday, Oct. 27, the three water treatment plants were producing more water and levels in water reservoirs were increasingly being replenished.

“Thank you to our customers for your cooperation and for taking actions to cut back your water use. As we lift the boil water notice, we need your continued help to limit water use until our plants return to full operation levels,” said Greg Meszaros, Director of Austin Water.

“In our 100-year history, we have never seen conditions like we experienced this week. To say that this is unprecedented is an understatement. After we return to regular operations, staff will analyze the data and determine what steps are necessary to ensure the resiliency of our systems. We recognize the trust that our customers put in our services every day, and we will continue to work hard to maintain that trust. “

Water Quality Testing

Austin Water worked with state officials at TCEQ to establish corrective actions necessary to lift the boil water notice. The actions included analyzing more than 70 water samples from throughout the system across the City. Test results, reviewed by TCEQ officials, indicated that water provided by Austin meets all regulatory standards and is safe for human consumption. On Sunday, TCEQ gave the City of Austin the all-clear to lift the boil water notice.

Emergency Mandatory Water-Use Restrictions

The following emergency mandatory water-use restrictions remain in place until further notice. These restrictions are necessary to ensure that adequate water supply is available to meet customer needs while the system returns to normal operations.

Restrictions remaining in place include:

- No outdoor irrigation
- No adding water to pools or spas
- No operation of ornamental fountains
- No at-home pressure washing, vehicle or surface washing

Effective Monday, October 29, 2018 at 10 a.m., the following commercial uses of outdoor water will be allowed:

- Wash vehicles at a commercial car wash compliant with City Code 6-4-10 (B)
- Operate irrigation systems for the purpose of testing or repair by a licensed irrigation professional, and
- Conduct pressure washing using commercial equipment in compliance with City Code 6-4-11 (B)

Austin Water continues to work closely with Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center and city, county and state agencies to coordinate the final stages of the water treatment system recovery.

Customer Resources

Customers can visit austintexas.gov/BoilH2O for the latest information and frequently asked questions.