

The Source



A Comprehensive Source of Information for Source Water Protection Programs

October 2017

Hurricane Harvey and the continued damage from that storm has brought the safety of drinking water to our attention in a way that we don't often deal with. In Beaumont, 120,000 residents lost their water supply, while numbers on losses across Texas, including the City of Houston, are still unknown.

This quarter, we are reviewing water quality in the face of natural disasters. Although drinking water supplies is imperative, it is often not on the forefront of citizens' minds. Please be sure to

pass this information on to anyone in the service area so that they may be more prepared for the future.

Regards,
Anne Ruthstrom
Source Water Protection Specialist

Drinking Water and Natural Disasters

Natural disasters such as our recent hurricanes and floods can damage water supply lines and contaminate wells with bacteria, toxic chemicals, and pathogens. Surface waters carry these contaminants along with sewage, sediment, trash, and other debris, forcing suppliers to rely on emergency supplies or other sources. Power outages can also affect the system's ability to function. Disinfection can become impossible when systems are overwhelmed like this, making conservation imperative by those with working faucets.

Systems will monitor chlorine residuals and system pressure as soon as they can gain access to the system's control facilities. Losses of pressure can occur from water pipes being damaged or washed out by floodwaters and debris. Losses of pressure can allow those waters to enter the water system, contaminating service areas that may not be affected by floods or storms. When all samples are satisfactory, the water system will notify customers that the water is safe to drink. For this reason, it's important to pay attention to any warnings or notices from your water system.

If you know your home or property will flood, relocate any paints, cleaners, oils, and other chemicals to a higher placement to avoid contributing to water source contamination.

What if I have a private well?

Well-owners can bring their water to a roiling boil for two minutes to destroy disease-causing bacteria and parasites. This is advised even if you chlorinate your water because treatment may not be effective against contaminated flood waters.

Once access to your well can be safely reached, have a water sample analyzed by a lab certified to test drinking water. See the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) link below for a recently updated list of labs.

How much water should I store?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests storing at least a 3-day supply of drinking water for each person and each pet in your household for emergencies, and to try to store a 2-week supply if possible. Printable instructions on using bleach to disinfect during emergencies can be kept with your Disaster Supplies Kit.

CDC Disinfection Instructions:

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/creating-storing-emergency-water-supply.html>

TCEQ has provided an updated list of accredited laboratories in Texas available for microbial testing, along with advice for customers of public water suppliers and other flood water information, on the following webpage:

https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/homeland_security/flood/flood_safewater.html

U.S. EPA Drinking Water Hotline: (800) 426-4791

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Main Line: (512) 239-1000

****Ask to speak to your Regional Office staff, or visit the link below for an up-to-date list of certified labs in Texas****

https://www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/compliance/compliance_support/qa/txnelap_lab_list.pdf

Congratulations to Bethel Ash Water Supply Corporation for completing their Source Water Protection Plan!

For assistance with creating or updating a SWP Plan for your System, contact me by email at Anne.Ruthstrom@trwa.org, or by phone at (512) 954-1360.

"Hope is the thing with feathers, that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without words, and never stops at all." - **Emily Dickinson**



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