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COUNTY OF ESSEX, NEW JERSEY



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RESIDENT AND MEDIA ADVISORY
Friday, August 11, 2023 – 1:00pm

Summary

The Township of Verona remains under a boil water advisory issued by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on Wednesday, August 9, 2023. The Township has ceased pumping in water from surrounding towns and has applied for relief from the order. The relief is pending testing and approval from the DEP, which is anticipated to occur on or before Saturday, August 12.

Comprehensive History and Update

On Monday, August 7, 2023, the Passaic Valley Water Commission experienced a large-diameter water main break in Totowa. The Commission addressed this issue, and it did not affect Verona. On Wednesday, August 9, a PVWC pump station suffered an electrical failure resulting in low water pressure to Verona.

The Township currently purchases all of its water from PVWC as our wells have been offline since 2021 pending construction of new facilities and equipment to remove PFOA, PFAS, and Arsenic from the water supply after the State of New Jersey changed regulations to lower the acceptable amount in drinking water. The Township is awaiting permitting for construction of new water treatment facilities from the Department of Environmental Protection. The current boil water advisory is not associated with Verona's water supply, as all water is being sourced from PVWC.

In order to ensure adequate water pressure to residents and business, the Township opened connection valves with Cedar Grove to increase water supply into the Verona system. The Township additionally worked with the Township of Montclair to pump water in from their system using a Verona Fire Department engine. This precipitated the State of New Jersey Department of Environment Protection to issue a boil water notice at 12:00pm due to low pressure in the system and the need to use fire apparatus to pump. In three (3) similar prior incidents, the DEP did not issue boil water advisories.

The Township Manager convened a series of meetings which included representatives from the Department of Public Works, Police Department, Office of Emergency Management, Fire Department, and the Public Information Officer to address immediate needs, communication, and planning for the duration of the incident.

On Thursday, the Passaic Valley Water Commission issued a statement that it had not issued a boil water advisory for Verona. While this was accurate, its incomplete nature led to confusion within the Township. The boil water advisory was issued by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Certain upper floors of Claridge House II did not have water service due to the low pressure in the system. The actions of the Township to increase the water pressure through mutual aid agreements mitigated this issue. All Claridge II residents had full water pressure by 9:30pm.

After the Township water tanks were filled and pressure was restored, Verona discontinued pumping from Cedar Grove at 4:00am on Thursday, August 10 and Montclair at 6:00am. This allowed the Township to file for relief from the boil water advisory.

Relief from the boil water order requires hydrant flushing and water sample testing from locations determined by the Department of Environmental Protection. The Township conducted hydrant flushing during the evening of Thursday, August 10, immediately after receiving DEP approval of the fifteen (15) flushing/testing sites. The Township similarly began water testing. The DEP added three (3) additional testing sites. The Township received final approval from the DEP for testing sites at 11:45am on Friday, August 11.

Water testing is expected to take approximately 15-18 hours, but approval could occur earlier. Final approval from the DEP will occur on or before Saturday, August 12. The testing will both ensure the DEP boil water advisory is lifted and provide evidence of the safety of the water.

The Township will provide an update this evening, even if the situation remains unchanged. An earlier update may be provided if test results and DEP approval come earlier than expected.

The Township administration is reviewing all public information and communication procedures. A report and discussion on these procedures and the response to water incident will occur in public session at the Township Council meeting on Monday, August 21.