



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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Port Lavaca Water Treatment Plant Water Outage - SUMMARY REPORT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, **June 13, 2006**

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This information and a copy of the Boil Water Notice will also be available at www.gbra.org

Plant Background:

The Port Lavaca Water Treatment Plant has been providing treated drinking water to the City of Port Lavaca since 1970, the Calhoun County Rural Water Supply System since 1971, and the Port O'Connor Municipal Utility District since 2000. The Plant uses surface water diverted from the Guadalupe River under water rights permits from the State of Texas and transmitted through approximately 20 miles of delivery canals.

The Treatment Plant has a permitted capacity of 6-million gallons per day (mgd) and uses conventional treatment technology to process the surface water into highly treated drinking water of excellent quality that meets or exceeds all state and federal drinking water standards. The process includes chemical addition, sedimentation, filtration through multi-media filters, and disinfection.

Today's problem is extremely unique because **in its 36 years of operation, this is the only time the Plant has experienced an outage of this magnitude!**

Summary Report:

At approximately 3 a.m. on Tuesday, June 13, GBRA Port Lavaca Water Treatment Plant personnel became aware that the filter pipe gallery located in a basement area below the main building was filling with water. The pipe gallery is the part of the plant housing the pipes, valves, meters and electrical equipment used to operate, monitor, and backwash the five filters. This required the staff to shut down the plant and, as storage of water in elevated and ground tanks was depleted, there was a loss of water pressure in the retail distribution systems in Port Lavaca and rural Calhoun County. Plant personnel immediately notified officials with the City of Port Lavaca, as well as Rural Water Supply System directors, the Port O'Connor Municipal District operator, the Calhoun County Emergency Manager, and the Corpus Christi office of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

In addition, calls were placed to local radio stations asking them to inform their listeners of the situation and requesting immediate water conservation and curtailment of all unnecessary water use, including outdoor watering.

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GBRA personnel were forced to shut down automated systems, secured an emergency generator, and brought in GBRA technicians and a local electrical contractor to assist in getting the plant back into operation as quickly as possible.

It took several hours just to pump out the large gallery and 're-wire' around damaged electrical equipment. At approximately 1:30 p.m., power was restored to the control panels to start up the plant equipment so that the location of the leak could be determined.

During this time, the City of Port Lavaca and the Calhoun County Rural Water Supply System experienced loss of pressure and many areas were without water. However, the community of Port O'Connor had sufficient water in ground and elevated storage tanks to keep their customers supplied during this temporary outage.

By early afternoon, it was determined that a 6-inch cast iron water line located in a crawl space beneath the Plant had sheared off at a wall, flooding the pipe gallery. This pressurized line serves a fire hydrant for fire protection, washdown water for filters, and treated, potable water for domestic purposes in the Plant.

As of mid afternoon, repairs were underway to cap off the water line to prevent additional water infiltration. "We are in the process of starting up the Plant and restoring pressure. Treated water production is expected to resume late this evening," said Herb Wittliff, Manager of GBRA's Calhoun County Operations.

Until damaged meters, valve operators and other electrical equipment in the pipe gallery can be repaired or replaced, GBRA personnel will manually operate the plant to ensure continuous delivery of treated water to customers.

Wittliff explained that any time delivery of water in a public distribution system is interrupted, state regulations require the supplier to issue a 'boil water' notice to customers. All residents in areas that lost water pressure should boil drinking water as a precautionary measure until further notice.

In addition, GBRA has arranged with HEB for a truck of bottled drinking water in one-gallon containers to be available tonight at the Bauer Community Center in Port Lavaca for anyone who needs supplemental drinking water until pressure and service are restored to their home or business.