

Twin Forks MDWCA

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October 5, 2005

NEXT MEETING: The next regularly scheduled meeting of Twin Forks MDWCA Board of Directors will be 10-08-05 at 10 o'clock a.m., at the office.

The State of New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission has certified that **JARED W. MITCHELL** has met the requirements for utility operator certification adopted by the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission pursuant to the "Utility Operator Certification Act," and is hereby certified as a Utility Operator authorized to operate and maintain Water Systems 1. Date of issue: September 16, 2005. Certificate Number: 007526. Expires: May 31, 2009. Congratulations, Jared!

This Newsletter will vary from the usual monthly review and will address all the issues and summarize actions taken with regard to contamination of Twin Forks MDWCA's water system.

September 14, 2005: The lab in Alamogordo advised that water samples taken at 11 Deadwood in Forest View and 24 Pinecrest in Balsam Canyon failed. The sample in Balsam Canyon tested positive for "Total Coliform" and the sample taken in Forest View tested positive for "Total Coliform" and "E.coli". Repeat samples were taken from Forest View September 14th and from Balsam Canyon September 15th. Repeat samples are taken at the original address and 5 water meters upstream and 5 water meters downstream.

September 16, 2005, 4:53 PM: Report from the lab reflected that the sample taken from the original location in Forest View again tested positive for "Total Coliform" and "E.coli". The upstream test was negative and the downstream test was positive for "Total Coliform". All 3 samples taken from Balsam Canyon tested positive for both, "Total Coliform" and "E.coli".

September 18, 2005, 2:14 PM: The presence of E.coli in water indicates that the water may have been in contact with sewage or animal wastes, and could contain disease-causing organisms. Most strains of E.coli are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. However, a positive test for E.coli in the drinking water supply may indicate the presence of dangerous strains of E.coli or other disease-causing organisms, which are sometimes found in sewage or animal wastes. These types of organisms may cause severe gastrointestinal illness and, in rare cases, even death. Children, the elderly, and immune-compromised individuals are at an increased risk for illness.

Actions have been and will further be initiated to identify the possible source(s) of contamination, complete any mechanical repairs if applicable, establish acceptable disinfections, and flush out the water system. In addition, the Drinking Water Bureau will continue to assist with troubleshooting to identify the source of the problem along with the assistance of their contractor, New Mexico Rural Water Association (NM RWA).

The New Mexico Department of Health has also been notified and will remain on alert for any health effects linked to this water quality issue.

Many areas in New Mexico currently have contamination problems. It has been blamed on the heavy monsoon rains and wildlife. For some it was their only water source. Fortunately we have the Blanscett Well producing 20 gallons per minute and will soon add another well expected to produce 15-20 gallons per minute. The Blanscett Well was tested and is amazingly pure!

Joseph Savage, NMED (DWB) and Don Castillo, NM (RWA) came immediately to assist with the appropriate action. All 3 springs were disconnected from the distribution system. 13.5 gallons per minute were lost, 19,440 gallons per day or 583,200 gallons per month, leaving only 20 gallons per minute from the Blanscett Well to serve the entire Association, adding 48 households in James Canyon.

A "Boil All Water Order" was issued and all members had to be notified within 24 hours. There are 102 full-time residents and 344 part-time residents. 123 members who had furnished E-mail addresses were notified at 4:56 PM on September 16th. Other residents received notices handed out in the office and on their doors. Notices were posted on all area mailboxes, the James Canyon VFD Door and the Twin Forks MDWCA Office Door. There were broadcasts on local television stations and in the local newspaper.

September 19, 2005, 6:34 PM: E-mail notices sent to members and copies were posted in all the aforementioned places that NMED (DWB), NM (RWA) and Twin Forks MDWCA would participate in a total flush of the system (23 miles of line and 9 storage tanks) beginning at 8 AM Tuesday, September 20, 2005. The "Boil Water Order" was continued and members were advised they would notice a "very strong chlorine odor in their water".

September 20, 2005, 6:09 AM & 10:34 PM: Update by E-mail and posted in all the aforementioned places advised people at the end of lines to open their faucets to help the chlorine run through. They were advised to disconnect water softeners and reverse osmosis systems; and requested to turn off their hot water heater and drain through their hot water faucets, then fill with cold water from the system and to let that set for 24 hours. They were requested not to bathe or take showers as the chlorine level could burn their skin. The "Boil Water Order" was to be continued for drinking, cooking and hand-dishwashing.

The consensus was that the monsoon rains caused run off that washed animal feces into the springs and caused the fecal E.coli. It was determined that contamination was extreme in the Sixteen Springs and Forest View Tanks #7, #8 & #9. The entire system became dependent on the Blanscett Well and emergency measures were taken to complete the new well in Forest View so it could be connected. Due to rapid-changing conditions, members receiving E-mail were requested to help spread the word to their neighbors.

September 21, 2005, 10:36 PM: Update by E-mail and posted in all the aforementioned places advised people that the chlorine was continuing to make its way throughout the system and requested that they continue with the instructions posted September 20th.

Members were reminded to observe the use provisions contained in the Rules & Regulations to help conserve water - no outside watering and no washing cars.

September 22, 2005, 8:35 PM: Update by E-mail and posted in all the usual places advised people that we believed we were making very good progress sanitizing the system. Water samples were improving. Joe Savage and Don Castillo assured us this contamination did not just happen in the last week or so - that is had built up over a longer period of time and had just reached the level of intolerance following runoff during recent monsoon rains.

September 25, 2005, 2:11 PM: Notice by E-mail and posted in all the usual places restricted water use to "Kitchen & Sanitary ONLY - No Laundry" and requested members to use bottled drinking water and to flush commodes only when necessary. The "Boil Water Order" would remain in effect until further notice.

September 26, 2006, 8:14 AM: Notice by E-mail and posted in all the usual places passed along advice from NMED (DWB) that "Part-Time Residents should not drain their hot water heaters but just turn on the hot water faucet and let it run (about 5 minutes) and to disinfect their own storage tanks by putting 2 or 3 cups of household bleach in them and letting them set overnight. But they could start flushing their house immediately after adding the bleach".

September 27, 2005: Special tests were taken on the springs to determine if the springs are under the influence of surface water. Results will not be available before 6 to 8 weeks. Tests were positive for E.coli in the spring located behind the old office in Twin Forks West. If approved to go back on line, a lot of remedial construction will be required. All Modifications to Water Systems must be submitted to NMED (DWB) for approval. A survey conducted in February 2005 pointed out some of the problems but they were not addressed, so it was written up in the May 5th Sanitary Survey Report. NMED (DWB) and NM (RWA) was contacted for guidance to make the necessary repairs. They were scheduled to come the week following the week the water samples failed.

September 29, 2005, 4:54 AM: Update by E-mail and posted in all the usual places, restated the "Boil Water Order" still in effect for drinking, cooking and hand-dishwashing; "Kitchen & Sanitary Use Only - No Laundry".

Chlorine Injection Pumps were installed at the Blanscett Well and at the pump station by Tank #9 using 10% Sodium Hypochloride to eliminate the bacteria.

NMED (DWB) gave approval to temporarily use a 3,000 gallon water storage tank on loan from Stephen Scott. Well #1 (2 gallons per minute, 120 gallons per hour, 2,880 gallons per day and 86,400 gallons per month) is being transferred to Sixteen Springs and Forest View via that loaner tank. About one-half of our members (206) live in Sixteen Springs and Forest View and they are very dependent on water from the Blanscett Well coming across the mountain. The new well in Forest View will remove their dependency on the Blanscett Well.

The State Engineer gave permission to hook up the new well in Forest View pursuant to an emergency order. NMED (DWB) initially denied our request but a telephone call from County Commissioner Mike Nivison resulted in obtaining their approval. Politics!

We were approved for a \$32,485 emergency grant and the Otero County Commissioners approved helping us get some "fast money" from the State Legislature this year and putting us first in line for a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant next year.

As stated in our Resolution to abide by the Open Meetings Act, our normal posting places have always been the area mailboxes, the James Canyon VFD Door and the Twin Forks MDWCA Door. The Mayhill Post Office informed us that it is against regulations for anyone to use "their" mail boxes for posting notices - even if it is a community health risk issue. It was some of our members that installed those mailboxes. Just as soon as time permits, bulletin boards will be installed at each entrance to every subdivision for all members to clearly see when they enter their area.

September 29, 2005, 10:24 PM: After pumping 24/7 for 9 days, the Blanscett Well went down this evening. The driller began pulling the well but it was too dark and the risk of causing unnecessary damage was too great. Work was scheduled to begin at daybreak September 30th to determine the problem and when it would be back in service.

Water in the tanks was very low. Water pressure was low in many areas and many members were out of water in various subdivisions. Arrangements were made for delivery of potable water to the Water Office for filling jugs.

September 30, 2005: Following many telephone calls, a pump was finally located and purchased in El Paso for the Blanscett Well.

October 1, 2005: Potable water tank was provided by Cloudcroft and arrangements were made to purchase potable water from Cloudcroft. The tank is located by the office in the back of a pickup truck. Water for sanitary use was available from the nearby green storage tank. Members were advised to provide their own containers.

October 1, 2005, 6:00 AM: Notices by E-Mail and posted in the usual places advised members that the pump had gone out in the Blanscett Well and a new pump would be installed at daylight. Members were advised that it would take 2 or 3 days to fill the tanks and lines. Potable drinking water was available at the office and non-potable water for flushing commodes was available in the green storage tank at that same location.

October 1, 2005, 6:51 PM & 7:25 PM: Members were advised by E-Mail that the new pump had been installed and the Blanscett Well was pumping again. Tanks #1, #2A & B and #3 would be filled before water would be released through the lines. It was expected this would take approximately 45 hours and the water would be released very slowly so as not to blow out the lines while bringing the system back up.

October 2, 2005, 7:25 PM: Members were informed by E-Mail and posting in all the usual places that the Blanscett Well was back in operation and Tanks #2, #2A & B and #3 would be filled before water would be released very slowly into the lines. Encouragement was given as to the new well located in Forest View. They were informed as to locations to obtain potable water and water for flushing commodes and reminded that the "Boil Water Order" would remain in effect until further notice.

October 4, 2005, 9:26 AM: A brief summary was furnished by E-Mail and advised members that the tanks were full by 8:30 PM October 3rd so water was being released slowly into the system. Members are requested to:

1. Please do not attempt to fill storage tanks. That will prevent other members from getting water.

2. Kitchen & Sanitary Use (No laundry) must remain in effect until additional water supply is available from the new well located in Forest View Subdivision (hopefully within the next 10 days to 2 weeks).

3. The "Boil Water Order" will remain in effect until the quarantined tanks have been cleaned, resurfaced and are put back on line and until bacti samples and the NMED (DWB) monitoring samples all come back negative for both E.coli and Total Coliform.

A reminder that potable water is available in the white water storage tank on loan from Cloudcroft located by the office in a white Dodge Pickup and non-potable water is available from the green storage tank #9 located by the office for flushing commodes.

162 members have furnished their E-Mail addresses (up from 123). With so many part-time residents (344) it is impossible to give 24-hour notices during emergencies. Putting notices on 446 doors is not a practical option either. The question was "What if they come in at midnight?" There could be serious consequences. E-Mail addresses are not kept on file in the office. E-Mail addresses will not be disclosed to others without your consent.

Remarks: This has been a very unusual, tiresome and trying time for the Twin Forks MDWCA employees. The circumstances that occurred were beyond anyone's control. David Eoff, the driller, stopped drilling to pitch in and assist Jared with necessary work required by NMED (DWB) and NM (RWA), and many hours spent in the office filling out forms and other required paperwork about which he had extensive knowledge, hours of research, talking with the State Engineer and others, finding the best prices on purchases of materials required by NMED (DWB) and NM (RWA) to meet their requirements. His experience and assistance was invaluable to the Office Manager and the Utility Operator and he worked by my side through it all. Things got done much faster and at better prices through his contacts than we could have done on our own. We put in some very long days from daylight until dark. A very special "THANK YOU, DAVID EOFF!"

We are so very appreciative for the wonderful support we have received from nearly everyone. David Eoff, the driller, lives in our area and he didn't have any water. Perry Daily lives in Balsam Canyon and Charliss Randall and I live in Twin Forks West and none of us had any water either, although we pay the same thing for water that you pay. We volunteer our time at our own expense. We do not even ask for reimbursement for gasoline or mileage.

Only a few have rudely taken out their frustration on the Office Manager and Utility Operator or one of us who happens to answer the phone. My personal telephone numbers have been made available to all members so they won't have to talk to a recorder after office hours. I want to help everyone get water and I can do that when circumstances are not beyond my control. One caller (and you know who you are) was not only rude but extremely vulgar with the Office Manager. Henceforth, such actions will absolutely not be tolerated, especially if such remarks are made toward an employee. Employees have been directed to terminate such calls immediately.

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