

Vergas Water Emergency Debriefing

Present: Mayor Julie Bruhn, Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane, Maintenance Operator Matt Engebretson and Clerk-Treasurer Julie Lammers.

On May 19th, 2023 Mike DuFrane received a phone call from a local business noting backflow value failed resulting in blue dye backing up into city water system.

Billy's Corner Bar and Grill reported seeing a tinge of blue in their water around 9am.

Mike DuFrane contacted the Mayor and the City Clerk Treasurer regarding the water issue and also contacted Luke Hoffman, District Engineer MN Department of Health and Ben Oseien, MN Rural Water.

Matt Engebretson was contacted to begin flushing hydrant, on main street by Vergas Hardware. Flushing of hydrant began at 12:20 pm. Blue tinge to the water noted from the hydrant.

Julie Lammers contacted Patrick Waletzko, OTC Emergency Manager, and initiated the Vergas Water Emergency Response Plan. MN Department of Health provided the city DO Not Drink Water information to post.

Luke Hoffman, District Engineer, MN Department of Health, came to Vergas and inspected the business where backflow value failed and pulled samples from near-by hydrants and collected the MSDS sheet regarding dye risk, which was later found to have no health risks.

Julie Lammers contacted main street businesses and Assisted Living regarding water issue and MN Department of Health information. Based on Water Emergency Plan the Do Not Drink Water information was posted on Face Book and the City of Vergas Website, SMART 911 alert initiated, contacted the media, and posted on electronic sign in front of the liquor store. A text message was sent to the full council to make them aware of the situation.

Smart911 Alert report noted the alert went to 24 residents by phone, 22 residents by text and 6 residents by email which had signed up to receive messages. (Directions available on the City of Vergas website. The city receptionist will assist residents in setting up). Notice was sent at 3:40 as directed by MN Dept of Health.

All water in town flushed with focus on east side of city, which is the direction water flows, followed by each hydrant tested for fluoride.

The water tower water drained with the following 242,000 gallons of water used to flush hydrants.

Notice was recalled at 9:15 pm. alert was sent at

Identified Follow Up Actions:

1. Water/Sewer Committee update the City Ordinance to ensure it requires a back flow protector, as required for businesses utilizing chemicals, and an annual inspection.
2. Add to City of Vergas Water Emergency Response Plan to send alert utilizing the city newsletter email listing.
3. Promote residents getting signed up for the Smart911 Alerts. Outline information in the June newsletter.
4. Business with failed backflow value will not be allowed to have no city water hooked up until backflow protector installed and inspected.
5. Water/Sewer Committee review costs and establish the fine to impose on the business; to include increased water usage and city staff overtime.