



What Happened?

At about 10:00 AM on July 2nd 2021, an electrical fire, that we have every reason to believe was accidental, broke out at our main booster station, totally destroying the facility. This booster station is what moves water to the western half of our Avoca Treatment Plant system at an adequate pressure to safely serve our customers.

We have since obtained, by donation and rental, multiple temporary pumps. In order to get the water moving as quickly as possible, we resorted to a common method of using fire hoses as temporary piping. We are now moving water throughout our system, and are increasingly able to maintain water pressure. We are working on several more lasting fixes.

Why Are We on A Boil Advisory?

Initially, we were most worried about a total loss of water pressure. When water pressure drops too low, out of an abundance of caution any responsible water system would advise boiling water until it has seen multiple favorable test results ruling out the presence of bacteria in the water in the affected area. However, while our water pressure is now up again due to the multiple temporary pumps, Iowa Department of Natural Resources has advised us not to lift the boil advisory until we have implemented a more permanent fix – one which no longer uses the fire hoses – regardless of any test results.

We have *not* had any positive (unfavorable) test results for bacteria anywhere in our system. However, until we have a more permanent fix in, this is irrelevant.

What Is A Boil Advisory?

A boil advisory is a statement from Regional Water that anyone who is using our water should boil the water before using it for *direct human consumption*. If a human is going to drink it, cook with it, wash off their produce, sanitize a baby bottle, or brush their teeth, then any water which comes out of the tap should be brought to a full rolling boil for one minute – and then allowed to cool off – before using. Water connected to your refrigerator to make ice, etc., is not safe unless your refrigerator or your house has a reverse-osmosis filtration system (most in-house or refrigerator-based water filters use activated charcoal, which is not enough in this situation).

You do not need to boil water if you are using it to wash your hands, shower or bathe, wash your dishes, do your laundry, clean toys, water plants, or water livestock.

Regional Water has bottled water which has been generously donated by Fareway and HyVee, and is available free of charge to affected people. Bottled Water is available at the offices of Regional Water (108 Highway 59) and the Shelby City Hall, from 8am to 4pm, Monday through Friday. You do not need to boil bottled water before using it.

Who Is on The Boil Advisory?

Only water users who are “downpipe” of our main booster station will be affected. If your household pays a water bill directly to Regional Water, and your account number starts with A or C (indicating a rural account in a certain part of our system, generally speaking west of Highway 59 and east of Neola, with some east of Highway 59 and north of Harlan or in the Kirkman area), or CO (Corley residents), K (Kirkman residents), P (Persia residents), T (Tennant residents), or W (Westphalia residents), you are affected.

If you receive your water from the cities of Earling, Panama, or Portsmouth, you are affected. These cities get 100% of their water from Regional Water.

The City of Minden uses Regional Water as a supplemental source of water, and stopped using us as a source shortly after the fire broke out. The City of Minden needs its residents to conserve water; if they are unable to keep up with demand, they will be forced to go back on us and then they will also be affected. Early in the crisis it was reported that Minden was affected; this was an early assumption on Regional Water’s part.

How Long Will We Be on A Boil Advisory?

Per the direction of Iowa Department of Natural Resources, we must maintain the Boil Advisory for as long as we are using fire hoses as part of our temporary fix. The only real way to get around that means getting permanent pumps and piping in place so as to stop using the temporary fixes. Once we have done that, we will take more than fifty samples throughout the system and have those samples tested by state-certified laboratories. Once we pass the tests, the Boil Advisory could then be lifted.

This is a timeframe of weeks, not days. We will update everyone when we are able to lift this advisory.

Do We Still Have to Conserve Water?

We are still asking all of our affected customers to try and conserve and prioritize their water usage as much as possible. We know that some customers simply must use water – livestock cannot really drink less – so we ask that those who *can* conserve water to do so. The temporary pumps in place as of July 8, 2021, are still pumping at a lot less capacity than our main booster was capable of, so if everyone used as much water as they would normally use on a hot summer day, we could lose water pressure again. We hope that an improvement to our temporary pumping arrangement will fix that by this coming weekend of July 10.

Is There Additional Help for Livestock?

Affected livestock farmers that are unable to water livestock at the same capacity and feel they need supplemental water are encouraged to contact their County EMA Office if they help securing a large quantity of water to livestock.

How Are You Contacting People?

The County Emergency Management Agencies have been and will continue to be our primary method of notifying everyone affected. More than three thousand people have been affected by what has happened here and Regional Water does not have the administrative capacity to provide real-time updates to all affected persons without their help. You can help them, and yourself, by signing up for emergency alerts and notifications in your county, by either calling your county EMA office or going to their website to register for alerts.

Shelby County EMA 712-755-5160

[Shelby County EMA Website](#)

Pottawattamie County EMA 712-328-5777

[Pottawattamie County EMA Website](#)

Harrison County EMA 712-269-2829

[Harrison County EMA Website](#)