



From the Supervisor:

On September 19<sup>th</sup> the Town of DeWitt was issued a "Boil Water Order" by Onondaga County; the order was lifted on September 26<sup>th</sup>. I want to address how the issue came about, how we addressed it, and also our communications to the public.

The water issue discovered on September 19<sup>th</sup> involved water coming into our Town of DeWitt water system from the City of Syracuse; testing revealed inadequate levels of chlorine, which can result in the growth of bacteria (coliforms). Coliforms were detected in the water in office buildings and complexes predominantly along Widewaters Parkway and Towpath Road.

For clarification, the Town of DeWitt has never had to treat water prior to this incident. Historically, it has been the responsibility of the two entities from whom we purchase water, OCWA and the City of Syracuse, to ensure proper levels chlorine in the water they provide to us.

Nonetheless, the Town chose to immediately take pro-active action to correct the problem:

- We immediately installed 3 chlorine injectors at 3 separate sites.
- As soon as construction and installation of the injectors was complete, we began water testing; performing successive water tests, sending them to the lab for corroboration, and then on to the Onondaga County Department of Health for confirmation.
- The Town worked expeditiously and seamlessly with the Onondaga County Department of Health throughout the project with approvals for construction, operation, and final water testing requirements.
- We also worked closely with Lemoyne College, National Grid, and residents along Radcliffe Drive who provided the Town unfettered access to the sites involved and to the power sources we needed to get the job done; we sincerely appreciate their support and partnership.

This specific water issue was a result of a convergence of highly unusual circumstances:

- This summer's hotter weather meant higher water temperatures inside pipes.
- Due to the COVID-19 virus, many of the Town's office buildings – usually 45,000 workers a day – have had dramatically lower occupancy.
- As a result, water coming to us from the City of Syracuse - already low in chlorine – remained warm and stagnant inside pipes for long periods of time; as such the chlorine residual usually present in the water dissipated over time, thus allowing for the possible growth of bacteria.

Additionally, from September 19<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> the Town updated our website 9 times, released 7 separate press releases to 18 media personnel, and posted daily updates on Facebook. Unfortunately, the County did not post a link to our town website and the media did not cover the issue thoroughly or frequently.

In order to mitigate these communication challenges, we encourage town residents and businesses to sign up for our town email list and/or our Facebook page; we are also launching a new website later this year.

Based on the above, the Town did everything possible to mitigate the water issue as effectively and efficiently as possible from a project management and communications perspective. Did we also learn some lessons along the way? Absolutely! And, we are mapping those lessons on as we go forward. Please contact my office with any questions.

Edward M. Michalenko, DeWitt Supervisor