



Alleghany County Water District

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January 6, 2022

Dear Customers:

We wish that this letter was going out under better circumstances, but “it is what it is”. Most of Alleghany has been without electricity since December 29th. Recent reports from PG&E say that the power will be restored to everyone no later than January 11th. Hopefully it is sooner! On top of that, cold weather combined with extenuating circumstances have caused water supply issues for the town.

Alleghany County Water District (ACWD) did its best to reach out to all local customers by telephone during the recent water supply events, but many customers do not have phones, or lost their phone service during the storms. Please make sure that the district has your current contact information. We did not call out-of-town customers as our resources were stretched to the max.

What is the cause of the recent water supply problems?

At the end of October ACWD staff discovered that the 3-year old 150,000 water storage tank above town was leaking from the bottom. The contractors who built the tank, our state inspector, the state funding division that paid for the tank, and our engineer were all notified immediately.

Because of the leaky tank, the town’s water supply had to be switched to the two back-up tanks that hold a combined total of approximately 12,000 gallons of water. (Previously we reported that these tanks hold a combined total of 13,800 gallons of water, but this information was incorrect due to the height of the overflow. They do not fill to the top and they are not perfectly level.)

During cold snaps a few customers almost always end up with frozen/broken pipes. As soon as the temps get into the 30’s the leaks thaw out and the system experiences water loss. Normally, with the 150,000 gallon tank in service, ACWD staff can detect the leaks and shut-off those services without impacting the remaining customers. Now that the 150,000 gallon tank is out of service this is not the case.

On the morning of Thursday December 30th temperatures rose to the low 30s (after over a week in the 20s). There was a drop in water pressure throughout town, followed by a complete loss of water for some customers. The cause was two customers with frozen/broken pipes that had thawed out. This drained the back-up water storage tanks. ACWD staff quickly located the leaks, shut-off those water services and turned the pumps on. It took approximately 3 hours from the time that the problem was discovered, for water service to be fully restored.

On the morning of January 2nd there was another loss of water pressure for the same reason (one customer that time). The problem was located within an hour and only a few houses lost water service for less than an hour.

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What is being done to mitigate the problem?

1. Keeping a close eye on the water level in the tanks is our primary means to mitigate the problem.

Hopefully, once power is restored to the tank site, the pressure switch that is currently attached to the 150,000 gallon tank can be moved to the back-up tanks. This switch communicates with the pumps at the pumphouse, triggering them to turn on when the water drops to a certain level. This was in place during the construction of the 150,000 gallon tank, but it was never 100% reliable and it does require electricity to work.

The town's normal water use requires pumping for about 5 hours every-other day while on the smaller back-up tanks. Edward Snyder has been monitoring the water level in the tanks every day and at all hours of the day and night when there have been problems. A huge thanks to Edward!!!

2. Local fire agencies have been notified of the reduced water storage capacity for firefighting and the County's water tender is being stored in the building at the County yard for additional water in the event of a fire.

3. Digging out water meters from under the snow is another mitigation measure. ACWD staff and some residents have dug out meters at locations that seem likely to have frozen pipes. The district will continue to dig out the meters, but most water bills have been estimated this month due to the deep snow. Thanks to everybody who has helped dig out meters.

4. Getting the 150,000 gallon tank back in service is the ultimate solution to recent problems. A thorough inspection of the inside of the 150,000 gallon tank in November by ACWD staff revealed extensive rust and other issues. The contractor made one trip to the site after the tank was drained but has not been back as of this writing. We continue to follow-up with all involved parties on a regular basis. The contractor, sub-contractor and tank manufacturer need to sort out who is responsible. The tank is under warranty.

5. ACWD submitted a Technical Assistance Request to the State on December 14th. The request is for an independent 3rd party investigation into the cause of the problems with the 150,000 gallon water tank. Including suggestions for the best way to fix it. We expect to hear if the request has been approved any day now. We do anticipate that they will help. Having an independent 3rd party inspection done is in the best interest of ACWD.

There is no indication that water quality is a cause of the tank deterioration. All water quality tests continue to come back within acceptable parameters. Water test results can be found on our website alleghanywater.org The link is in the middle right section of the homepage and can also be found on the customer service page.

What you can do to help

- Don't waste water.
- Prepare for potential water outages by filling containers with water and storing them.
- Report any water pressure loss immediately to either Bruce Coons HOME 530-287-3262 or at the post office weekday afternoons 530-287-3427
OR call Rae Bell HOME 530-287-3454.
- Dig out your water meter if you are able. Keep an eye on your water meter and water pipes. Report any problems immediately.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through this situation!

WISHING EVERYONE A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!