
From: Benzie, Richard (DEQ)
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 3:57 PM
To: Busch, Stephen (DEQ)
Subject: FW: Communications Outreach: Updates for ODWMA News

FYI – I slightly modified the information I provided to EPA earlier today when solicited for a Flint news story for the Communication Outreach committee.

From: Benzie, Richard (DEQ)
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 3:21 PM
To: Berman, Jonathan (DEQ); Monosmith, Carrie (DEQ)
Subject: RE: Communications Outreach: Updates for ODWMA News

Well, the Flint situation is certainly not a “good news” story and the media is well aware of it. But it sounds like it may be an appropriate subject for this effort. I provided the following summary earlier today in a response to some EPA staff in Region 5 that do not work in the drinking water program.

Last spring, the city of Flint decided to begin relying upon the Flint River as their source of drinking water using a treatment plant that was designed to do so. Last summer, the city experienced difficulties with stagnation in some areas of the distribution system due to significantly reduced demands resulting from the loss of a significant percentage of their residential and industrial demands that accelerated over the last decade. During the summer of 2014, they also had a couple of monitoring periods where they detected total coliform at monitoring sites in these stagnant areas, and one time they detected E.coli present. The ensuing boil water advisories and public notification heightened customer concern about the quality of drinking water and the switch from Detroit to the Flint River. Detroit supplied Flint with drinking water from Lake Huron, a much higher quality source than the Flint River. However, monitoring of the Flint water treatment plant tap has never indicated unacceptable water entering the distribution system. In response to these coliform detections and in an effort to prevent a recurrence, the city also increased flushing water mains in low flow areas and they have attempted to ensure the presence of a chlorine residual throughout the distribution system.

Compounding the problem of customer confidence was the results of initial monitoring for disinfection byproducts under the Stage 2 Disinfection Byproducts Rule. The initial monitoring reported significantly elevated levels of total trihalomethane (TTHM) compounds throughout the city's distribution system. Our district office advised the city that they needed to immediately implement operational techniques at the treatment plant and in the distribution system to reduce the formation of these compounds. The steps the city has taken have been successful and have reduced TTHM concentrations to the point where the latest results are below the drinking water standard. However, the standard is calculated on a running annual average and it is likely to be another 3 to 6 months before the annual average at each monitoring station will (hopefully) meet the standard. Until then, the city has to continue to provide quarterly public notification, which will continue to concern residents despite the latest TTHM results.

The switch to the Flint River, the microbiological problems, and the elevated TTHM concentrations experienced last year have caused a high level of customer dissatisfaction and distrust in Flint. The city is working diligently to restore that confidence, but it will not be accomplished easily or overnight. The city's switch to the Flint River is an interim measure intended to last only until a 72-inch pipeline from Lake Huron to the Flint water treatment plant is completed. It is currently under construction and expected to be in operation in mid-2016. At that point, the city's drinking water should again be very similar in quality to what they were receiving from Detroit.

Is this summary appropriate?

Richard

From: Berman, Jonathan (DEQ)
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 3:04 PM
To: Benzie, Richard (DEQ); Monosmith, Carrie (DEQ)
Subject: RE: Communications Outreach: Updates for ODWMA News

The audience is the DEQ Communications Outreach Team for next week's meeting to share information between divisions. It could be a list highlighting newsworthy items (regardless of media coverage), including "hot topics" or proactive good news stories you want the communications office to help package to media/stakeholders. It does not need to be highly technical, but for internal purposes it could be more so then for a general audience. Karen Tommasulo sometimes has ideas for media strategy that we can bring back to our divisions for development on any news item.

From: Benzie, Richard (DEQ)
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 1:36 PM
To: Berman, Jonathan (DEQ); Monosmith, Carrie (DEQ)
Subject: RE: Communications Outreach: Updates for ODWMA News

Jonathan,

Clearly, the Flint situation has been in the news, but I need to understand the target audience before we respond. Who is the audience and what level of information is appropriate for them?

From: Berman, Jonathan (DEQ)
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 11:55 AM
To: Benzie, Richard (DEQ); Monosmith, Carrie (DEQ)
Subject: Communications Outreach: Updates for ODWMA News

Richard/Carrie,

Do you have updates on what's currently making news or has the potential to make news for your sections? Richard, I'm guessing Flint's drinking water is on your list. Thank you in advance for your time and effort in making your contributions.

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