

Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water

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Office of Drinking Water Mission



Protect public health and help ensure a safe, trusted, fluoridated, affordable, **adequate supply of drinking water** (“beverage of choice”)



ODW enforces water quality standards at “waterworks” to ensure drinking water safety

Waterworks & Private Well

"Waterworks" means a system that serves piped water for human consumption to at least 15 service connections or 25 or more individuals for at least 60 days out of the year...

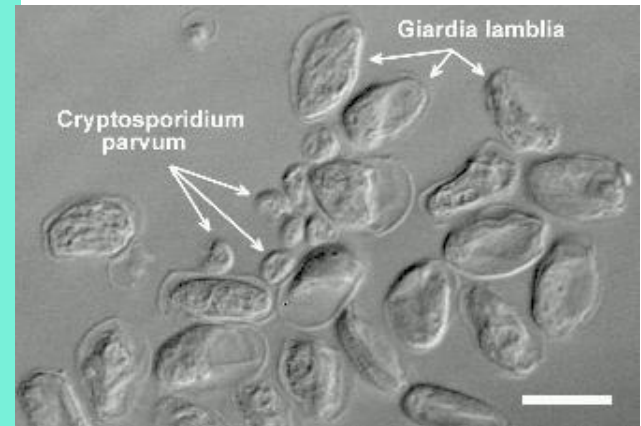
"Private well" means any water well constructed for a person on land which is owned or leased by that person and is usually intended for household ... use or other nonpublic water well.



Water Quality Standards for Over 90 Regulated Contaminants

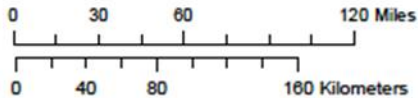
**“MCLs” for inorganic & organic chemicals,
DBPs, radionuclides**

**“Treatment techniques”
for microorganisms,
lead and copper**



ODW Field Offices

- AFO
- CFO
- DFO
- RFO
- LFO
- SEVFO



Office of Drinking Water

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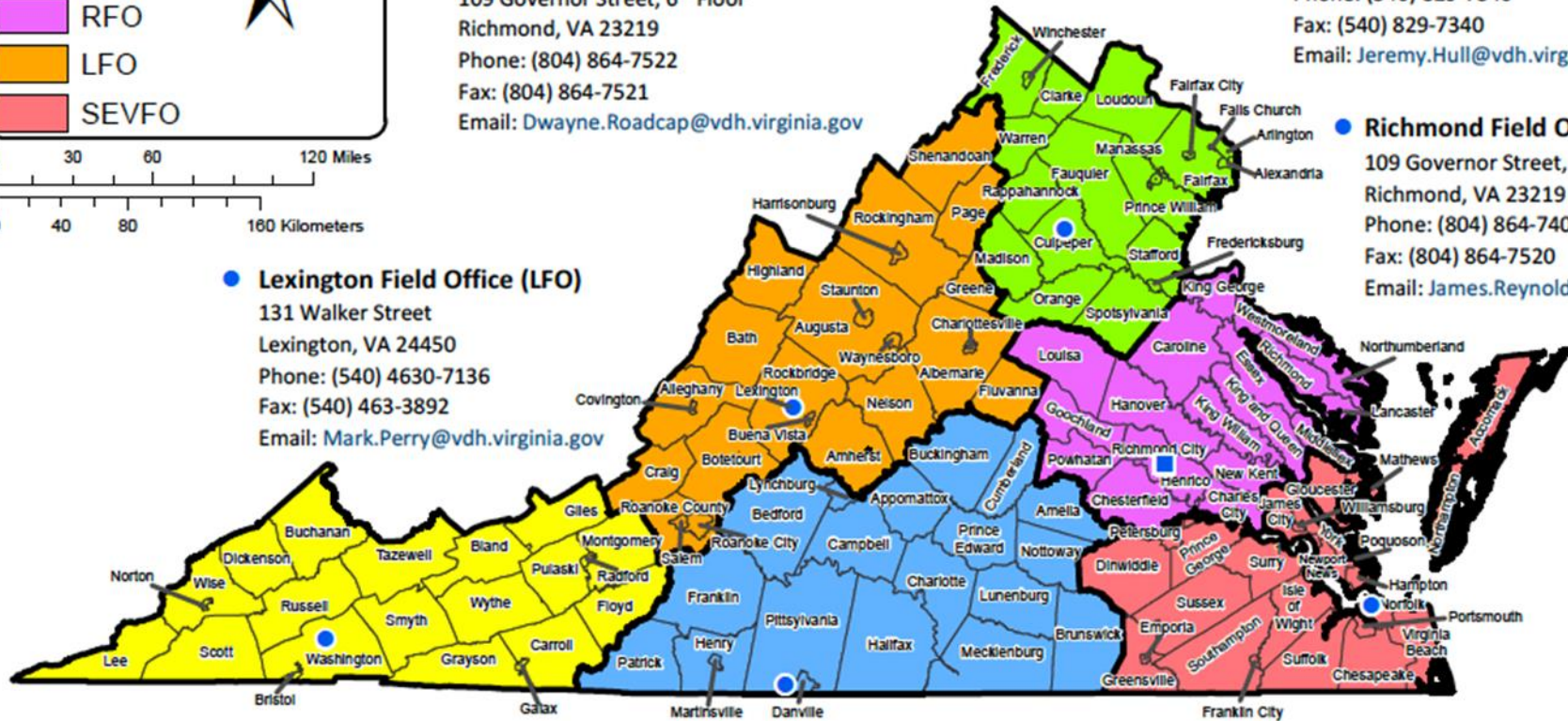
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Water Sector Challenges

Algal Blooms
Lead & PFAS
Emergency Response
Aging Infrastructure

DWSRF, BIL, and ARPA Funding



2020 Priorities (COVID-19 Pandemic)

Customer Service			
	Timeframe	Concern	Actions
	March	Are we ready & prepared?	Confirm continuity plans. Update website with COVID-19 information for water systems.
		Can we get to work?	Send documentation on essential staff
Can we do our work?		Start working with Va WARN. Get PPE	
Team Development			
	April - May	What should we do? How do we address needs?	Program guidance & Emergency Stakeholder meeting
Weekly check-ins with water systems			
Routine updates to health directors			
Regional meeting participation			
Identify resource needs & respond			
Daily check-in for ESF-3; weekly webinar			
Accountability			

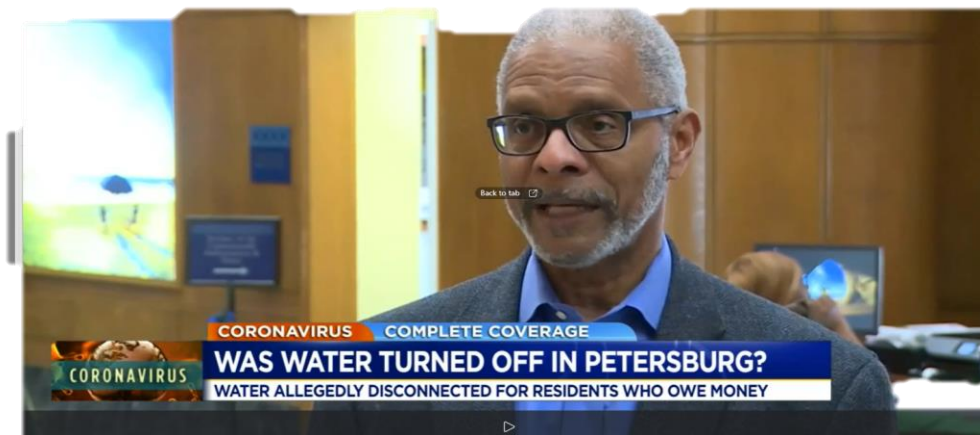
Key Highlight - tele-survey

Keeping water running in Petersburg for people behind on bills

By: [Wayne Covil](#) Posted May 11, 2020

PETERSBURG, Va. -- State officials hope to be able to work out issues pertaining to the water supply in Petersburg. At issue is whether the City of Petersburg can re-establish water to residents who have not paid their water bill.

Over the weekend, State Health Commissioner Dr. Norman Oliver sent a letter to Petersburg that expressed his concern over people losing access to water during the COVID-19 pandemic. He requested the city re-establish water to any home that lost service.



Health Officer Certification

- Petersburg residents are at a special risk.
 - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2020 annual report ranked Petersburg 132 out of 133 Virginia localities in health.
 - Petersburg is one of the least healthy places in Virginia.
 - Petersburg's population struggles with obesity and poverty, which can increase risks of severe illness from the pandemic.
- Access to running water helps improve hygiene.
 - Running water helps to easily and routinely wash their hands and clothes.
 - Running water reduces risks from the COVID-19 pandemic
- At-risk Residents must stay at home and frequently wash their hands.
 - Long-term health problems or other chronic conditions
 - The elderly and those who are immuno-compromised

The City's Concerns & Observations

"We have disconnected zero [during the pandemic]," Petersburg City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides said.

"We still have to pay for the water we are sending to our citizens."

"For us to have to buy something from someone and give it away for free is really impossible to do," Ferrell-Benavides said.

- More than 3,000 residents owe more than \$3 million in debt to the city, according to Petersburg Director of Public Works & Utilities Tangela Innis.

Discovered unique situations

- Internal plumbing leaks - had to disconnect
- Squatters at abandoned or condemned houses (no lease/not a property owner)
- Illegal connections with risk of backflow contamination
- New people moving to City and taking advantage
- “Don’t worry about paying” mindset (40% non-payers)
- Some owners with mental health and life safety concerns

Responses:

- City required payment plan to reconnect service
 - Virtually all citizens had access to water service
- Connected citizens with Social Services as needed
- Created Utilities Fund from private support
 - Dominion Power contributed \$90,000
 - CSX Corp provided \$5,000
 - Private donations (unknown contribution)

2021 General Assembly Policy Statement

HB538

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 26, 2021

Agreed to be the Senate, February 23, 2021

Recognizing that access to clean, potable, and affordable water is a necessary human right

- The lack of access to drinking water and water-related illnesses disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color,
- The realities of the COVID-19 pandemic have amplified the critical importance of water as a quality of life issue, sometimes the difference between life and death
- Direct or indirect costs to connect, deliver, and provide water should not be a hindrance to the access of water

HB538 Highlights

- Relevant state agencies shall consider that water is a human right when revising, adopting, or establishing policies and regulations, especially when those policies are pertinent to personal and domestic uses;
- A statewide water affordability program would ensure that every household can afford to pay its water, wastewater, and stormwater bills based on the household's income through percentage of income payment plans with arrears management;
- Water service disconnections for nonpayment are contrary to promoting public welfare and public health, and the Commonwealth must protect vulnerable populations, including seniors, youths, and medically compromised individuals, from water service disconnections; and
- The act of unauthorized reconnections of water services that were disconnected for an inability to pay should be decriminalized

The Rest of the Story....

- Governor Northam allowed EO51 to expire on June 30, 2021
- Health Commissioner Oliver's health certification to Petersburg also expired on this date.
- Petersburg resumed water shutoffs in November 2021

"Free water to some and not to others is a recipe for financial disaster. This is not acceptable," said City Manager Stuart Turille.

"The utility fund must be managed as a business by closing nonperforming accounts."

Questions