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# Drinking Water Processes and Collaborations: Roles of the Health District Post-Law Change

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**Franklin McMillian**, Emergency Services Planner  
*Office of Drinking Water*

**Jordan Good**, Local Health Emergency Coordinator  
*Central Shenandoah Health District*

# Objectives

1. *Explain the public health risks associated with loss of water in a metropolitan area.*
2. *Identify the key steps in investigating and responding to water loss incidents.*
3. *Examine the Health Districts in coordinating a response to water-related public health crises.*
4. *Examine the changes in laws and regulation.*

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# Drinking Water Emergencies

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## **OFFICE OF DRINKING WATER**

SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR A HEALTHY VIRGINIA

**WE PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH AND HELP ENSURE ALL VIRGINIANS  
HAVE A SAFE AND ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF DRINKING WATER.**



# ODW Overview

## What is a public waterworks?

- Provides piped water for human consumption to at least 15 connections OR regularly serves an average of 25 persons per day for at least 60 days of the year (restaurant, motels, parks, breweries, wineries, wedding venues, campgrounds, and marinas)

## ODW regulates 2,825 waterworks in Virginia.

- 20 of the largest waterworks serve over 55% on the population
- Only ~1% of the population in Virginia is not served by a public waterworks in some capacity

ODW is the regulatory office that oversees all public waterworks systems in Virginia. We then report to the EPA.

- We perform sanitary surveys
- We issue construction and operations permits
- We enforce chemical and bacteriological water quality
- We provide technical assistance
- We provide financial and construction financial assistance to waterworks
- We coordinate with other state agencies and provide Emergency Management technical assistance

# What We Do Not Do

We do not provide emergency drinking water resources

We do not do anything related to sewage (DEQ), unless it is affecting a water source used for drinking water



We do not regulate private connections into homes or businesses

We do not regulate private wells or septic systems (OEHS)

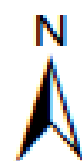
- We do regulate waterworks that use community wells to provide water

We do not issue advisories for recreational water uses (OEHS)

- Shellfish
- Swimming

## ODW Field Offices

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



# Office of Drinking Water

[www.vdh.virginia.gov/odw](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/odw)

### Central Office

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 Richmond, VA 23219  
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 Fax: (804) 864-7521  
 Email: [Dwayne.Roadcap@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Dwayne.Roadcap@vdh.virginia.gov)

### Culpeper Field Office (CFO)

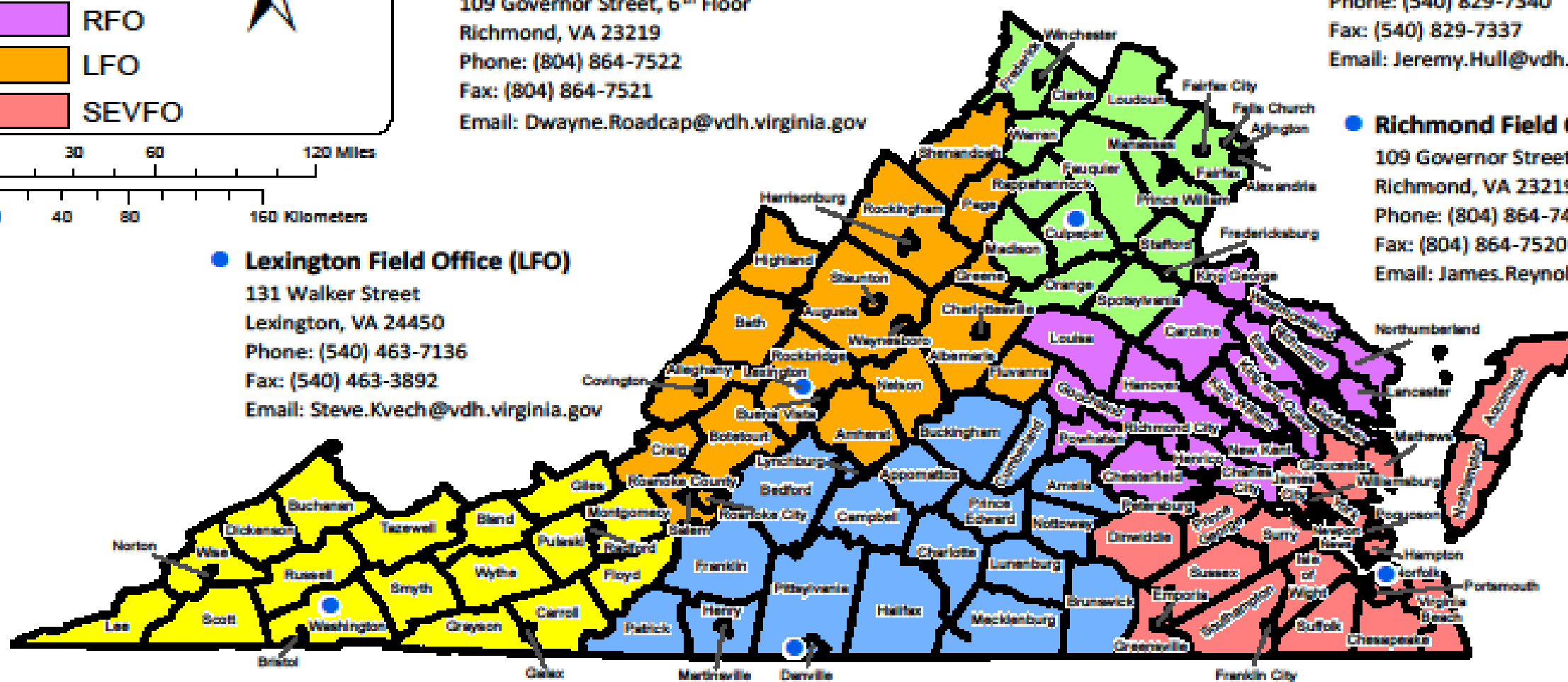
400 South Main Street – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
 Culpeper, VA 22701-3318  
 Phone: (540) 829-7340  
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 Norfolk, VA 23510  
 Phone: (757) 683-2000  
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 Email: [Daniel.Horne@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Daniel.Horne@vdh.virginia.gov)



*The mission of the Office of Drinking Water is to protect public health by ensuring that all people in Virginia have access to an adequate supply of affordable, safe drinking water that meets federal and state drinking water standards.*

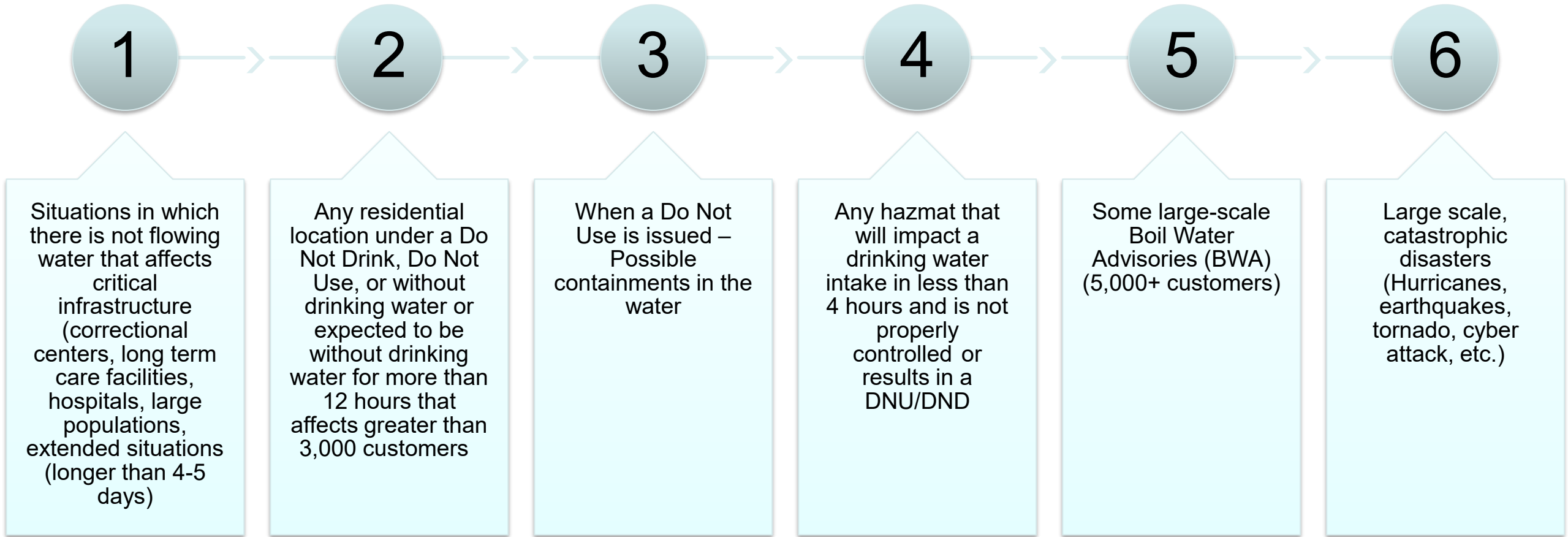


# Local Health Department Interaction

- Boil Water Notices
- Maximum contaminant level violations (nitrates, metals, etc.)
- Lead in drinking water
- Coordinate enforcement actions (permit renewals)



# So, What is a Water Emergency??

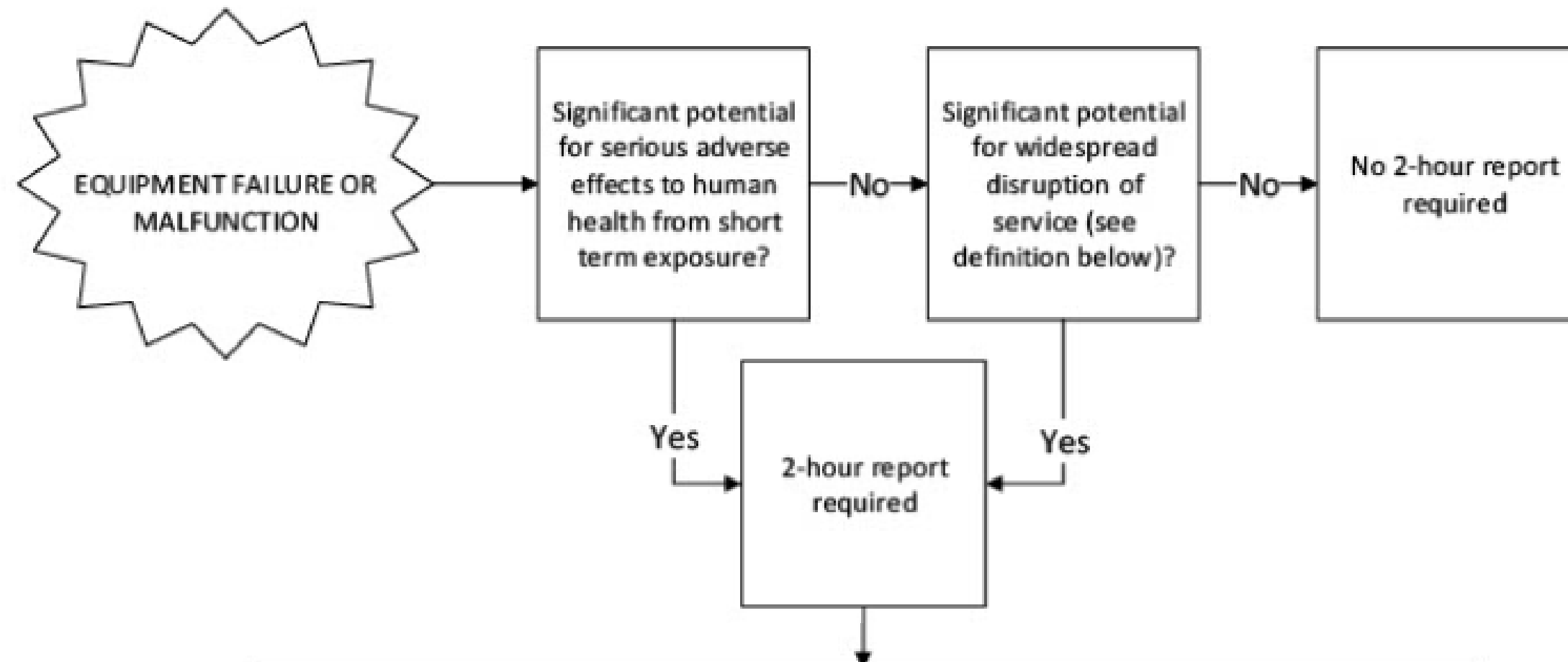


# 2 Hour Reporting Law

§ 32.1-174.5. Mandatory reporting of contaminant releases and equipment failures and malfunctions

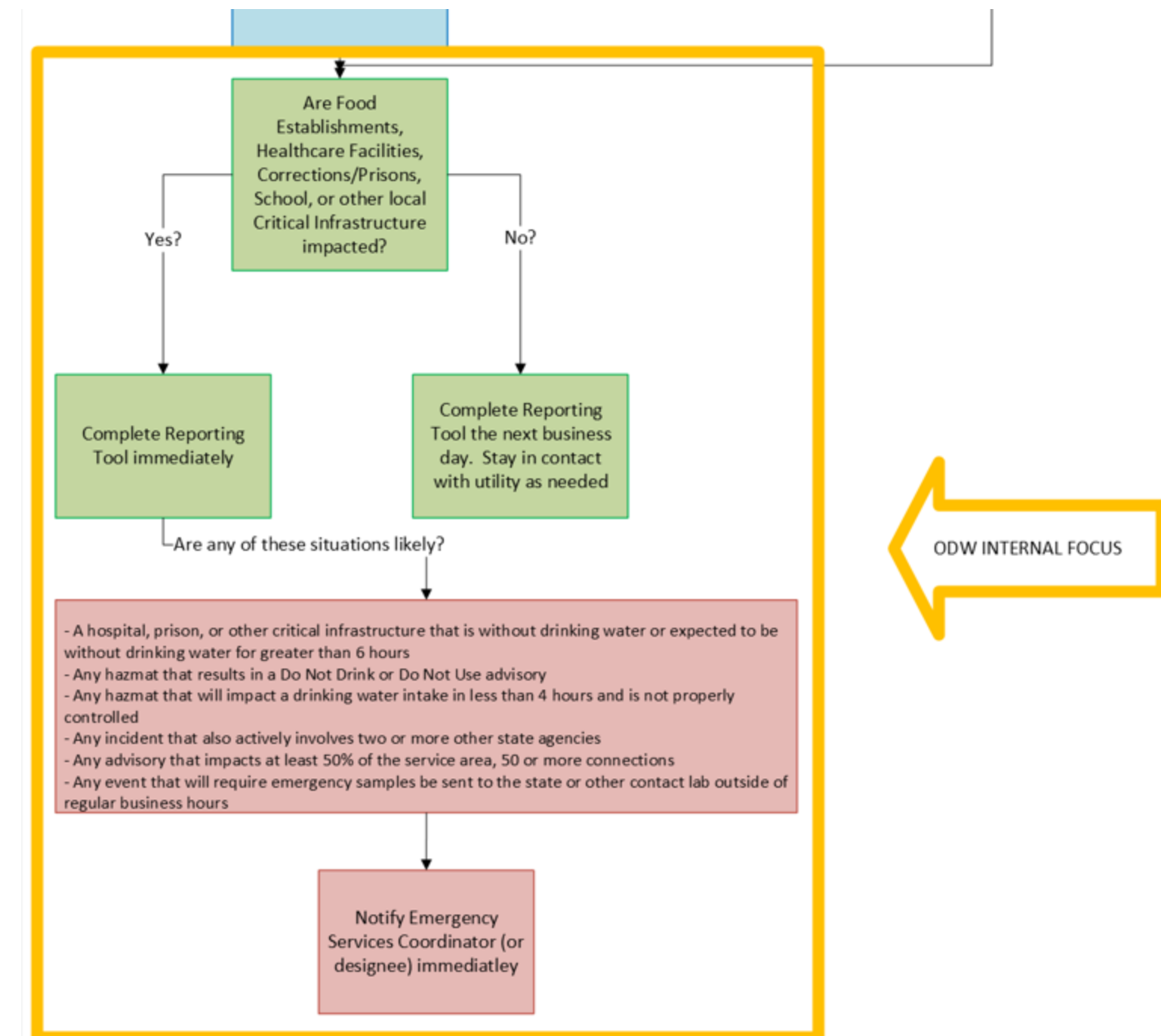
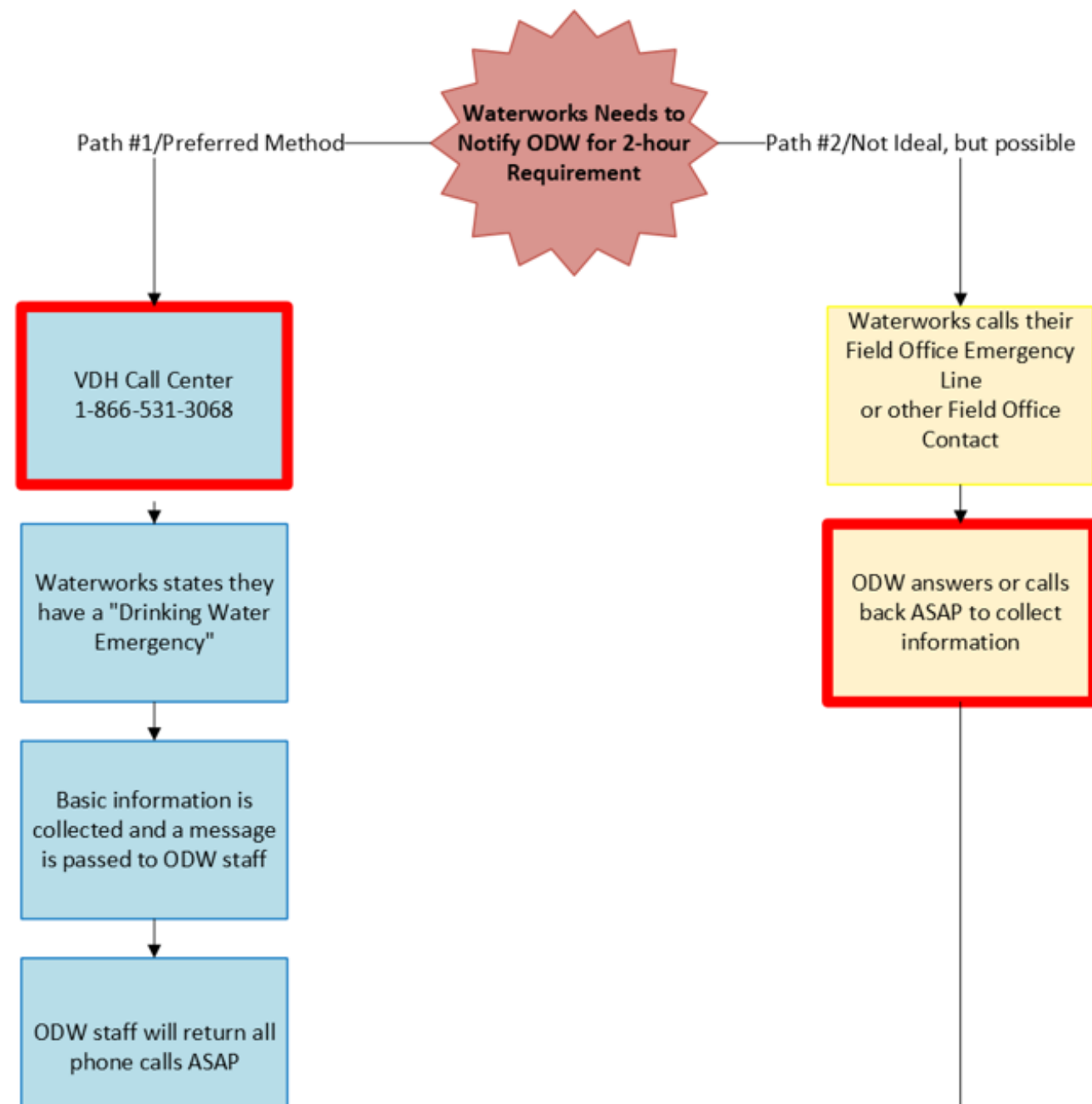
## 2-Hour Reporting Flow Chart

This chart is intended to aid in the decision making process following an equipment failure or malfunction.  
**Any contaminant release requires a 2-hour report to ODW.**



Call 1-866-531-3068 and tell the phone operator you need to report a drinking water emergency.

# 2 Hour Reporting Internal Flowchart



ODW INTERNAL FOCUS

# Reporting Tool

**VDH-ODW Water Advisory and Power Outage Reporting Submission & Updating Tool**


**New Advisories**

**\*\*Click on Left Sidebar Panel for Instructions\*\***

**VDH-ODW Water Advisory and Power Outage...**

**Advisory Submissions**  
*\*Click on a row to load advisory of interest into the EDITING window.*

Submission Date: 1/13/2026, 7:35 AM Utility Name: Town of Richlands Locality: Tazewell County Status: Initial
Submission Date: 1/13/2026, 7:30 AM Utility Name: Town of Cedar Bluff Locality: Tazewell County Status: Initial
Submission Date: 1/13/2026, 7:30 AM Utility Name: Tazewell Co. PSA - Middle Creek Locality: Tazewell County Status: Initial



**EDITING**

This is a tool to report any drinking water-related advisories and power outages to the VDH-Office of Drinking Water.

**PWS Information**

**Utility Name\***

**Date/Time of Incident\***

Recalculate

**City/County\***

Please begin typing locality name or select locality from drop-down menu



vest.gis (VDEM) <vest.gis@vdem.virginia.gov>

To: VEST ESF #3; Dawson, David (VDH); OEP Duty Officer; Scarborough, Linda (VDH); Franklin, Tristen (VDH)

Cc: Roadcap, Dwayne (VDH); Coughlin, Jessica (VDH); Whiteaker, Michael (VDH); Helmick, Meagan (VDH); Holt, Travis (VDH); Cooling, Judy (VDH); +1 other

Utility Name	Town of Chilhowie
Date/Time of Incident	1/14/2024 6:50 PM
Report Status	Initial
Locality	Smyth County
ODW Field Office	Abingdon Field Office
Local Health District	Mount Rogers
VDEM Region	4
PWS ID Number	1173090
Advisory Type	Boil Water Advisory
BWA Reason	Water main leak/break resulting in a loss of system pressure
Reason for Advisory	Water outage on Railroad Dr due to waterline break. This impacts McDonalds and also First Baptist Church
Connections Affected	2
Customers Affected	25
Customer Notification	Both impacted connections are notified and both are currently closed. Neither is a residential connection
Actions	McDonalds is closed. No one is at the church at this time. AFO staff in communication with the Town
Electric Power	Full Power / No outages
Pressure Lost	Yes
Low Pressure Reading	0 psi
Current Pressure	0
Schools Affected	No
Restaurants Affected	Yes
Healthcare Facilities Affected	No
Anticipated Date of Restoration	Town crew working to restore service. BWA anticipated to remain in effect until Wednesday, January 17, 2024
Restoration Details	McDonalds is closed. No one is at the church at this time. AFO staff in communication with the Town
Restoration Updates	
Additional Details	

Submitted By David Dawson  
 Field Office POC Lisa Crabtree  
 POC Phone (276) 525-6157  
 POC Email lisa.crabtree@vdh.virginia.gov



vest.gis (VDEM) <vest.gis@vdem.virginia.gov>

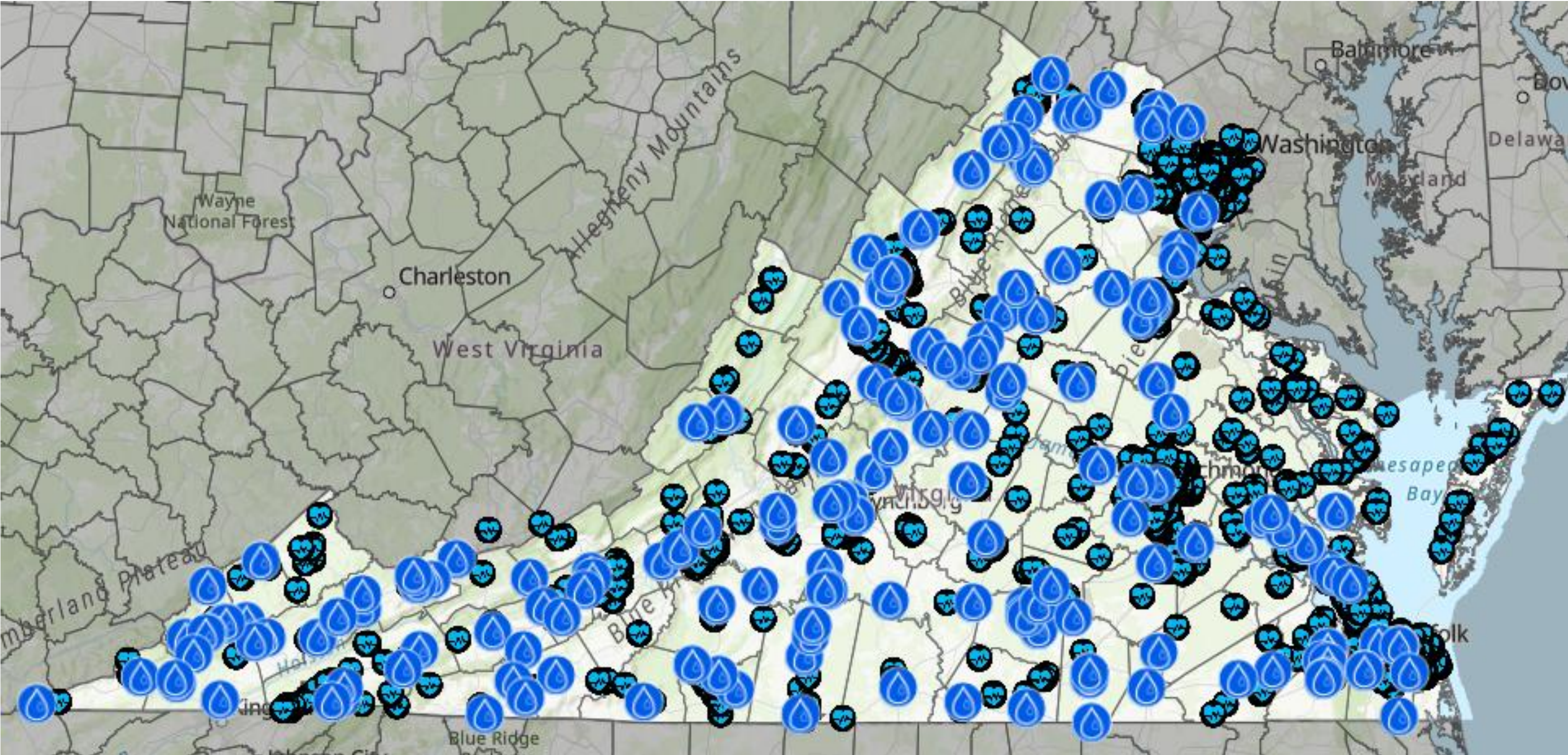
To: VEST ESF #3; Hull, Jeremy (VDH) <Jeremy.Hull@vdh.virginia.gov>; OEP Duty Officer; Scarborough, Linda (VDH)

Cc: Roadcap, Dwayne (VDH); Coughlin, Jessica (VDH); Lane, Wendi (VDH); Salgado, Anthony (VDH); McCord, Brent (VDH); Keatts, Michael (VDH); +1 other

Wed 1/10/2024 2:01 PM

Utility Name	Stafford County Utilities
Date/Time of Incident	1/10/2024 5:00 AM
Report Status	Initial
Locality	Stafford County
ODW Field Office	Culpeper Field Office
Local Health District	Rappahannock
VDEM Region	7
PWS ID Number	6179100
Advisory Type	Boil Water Advisory
BWA Reason	Water main leak/break resulting in a loss of system pressure
Reason for Advisory	A water main break resulted in loss of water pressure to approximately 5,000 service connections in the eastern area of Stafford County. The impacted area is bounded roughly by I-95 to the west, Route 1 to the east, Courthouse Road to the south and Rt. 610 to the north. Approximately 20 restaurants are impacted, but no schools or medical facilities.
Connections Affected	5000
Customers Affected	15000
Customer Notification	Waterworks owner is notifying impacted customers by distributing physical copies to commercial areas, County alert system, posting on County website, and social media.
Actions	ODW staff are providing technical assistance to the waterworks.
Electric Power	Full Power / No outages
Pressure Lost	Yes
Low Pressure Reading	0 psi
Current Pressure	0
Schools Affected	No
Restaurants Affected	Yes
Healthcare Facilities Affected	No
Anticipated Date of Restoration	Unknown, owner has not yet determined the location of the break
Restoration Details	ODW staff are providing technical assistance to the waterworks.
Restoration Updates	
Additional Details	Waterworks is making bottled water available to customers at St. Peter's Lutheran Church at 1201 Courthouse Road. Once the waterworks locates and repairs the break, the waterworks operator will disinfect and flush the water lines, and will collect bacteriological samples to confirm the water system is free of contamination prior to lifting the precautionary boil water advisory.

# Mapping Tool



# Water Emergency Toolkit

- For Local EMs, LHDs, other partner agencies
- Guidance and templates
- OEP Planning Division page



## WATER EMERGENCY TOOLKIT

(For use with Boil Water Advisories, Do Not Use advisories, Do Not Drink advisories or events of no water to communities)

### WELCOME!

This Water Emergency Toolkit (Toolkit) is for general guidance and use during a water emergency by locality Emergency Managers, Local Health District Emergency Coordinators, and/or other partner agency emergency response personnel. This Toolkit is For Official Use Only (FOUO). This Toolkit is NOT to be used to do the work of the responsible waterworks or the Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (VDH ODW). This Toolkit is for informational purposes only and any questions or concerns before, during, or after a water emergency should be communicated directly to VDH ODW.

**Jessica Coughlin**  
Emergency Services Coordinator  
Office of Drinking Water  
Virginia Department of Health  
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[Jessica.coughlin@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Jessica.coughlin@vdh.virginia.gov)

# Water Emergency Toolkit

- Reporting flowcharts
  - 2 Hour Event Reporting
- Guidance for partners on process
- Types of Breaks
- Boil Water Advisory Resources
  - Example timeline
  - Guidelines
  - Templates
  - Communications materials
  - FAQs



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## General Recommendations for State or Local Partners During a BWA

<u>General Recommendations for VDH ODW Field Office</u>	<u>Recommendations for VDH ODW Emergency Services Division</u>
Provide technical assistance to waterworks and technical assistance when requested by the ODW Emergency Services Division, LHD or other partners.	View initial Reporting Tool notification. Determine with VDEM Regional staff if a Critical Incident Report (CIR) will be issued and coordinate as needed.
Complete online Reporting Tool initial notification within 2 hours of learning of a water emergency. This reporting tool creates the initial notification to many partners, and it is imperative to get done quickly when critical infrastructure is impacted.	Schedule Coordination Call if needed with stakeholders.
Update Reporting Tool as needed.	Coordinate information sharing across agencies and partners. Troubleshoot concerns as they arise from internal and external partners.
Finalize Updated Reporting Tool when event is complete.	Track/document response activities related to the need to create a local Incident Management Team and publish Incident Support Plans.
Consult with ODW Emergency Services Coordinator and ODW Division of Enforcement, Compliance and Policy, when needed.	Perform hotwash/debriefing for significant events to identify points of success and/or gaps for future emergencies.
<u>Recommendations for Locality and/or other Partner Agencies</u>	<u>Recommendations for VDH LHD</u>
Be available to provide information to schools, other local government offices and/or share information provided by state agencies to the community	Look at the initial email report to check if any restaurants are affected. If restaurants are affected reach out per local LHD protocol
Consult with regional VDEM staff if resources are needed for the community	Email back on the initial email report regarding restaurant updates as needed.
If available, a reverse 911 notification may be requested. Consider posting signage via various methods in affected area	Provide context about community affected (access or functional needs, language barrier, etc. if known).
Share available information with County Manager/Administration/Elected Officials	Check in with local health department to inquire if they know of any needs for the community
Provide context about community affected (access or function needs, language barrier, etc. if known).	Be prepared to issue advisory in conjunction with VDH ODW IF the waterworks are noncompliant.
Be prepared for a Coordination Call if requested or request a coordination call as you see fit.	Standby for MRC support to disseminate advisories if requested.
Reach out to state agencies proactively with questions/concerns for your community.	Be prepared for a Coordination Call if requested or request a coordination call as you see fit.

# August 2026 Staunton Boil Water Advisory



# Staunton & Augusta

## Staunton City

Population: 26,361\*

Square Miles: 20 sq. mi.

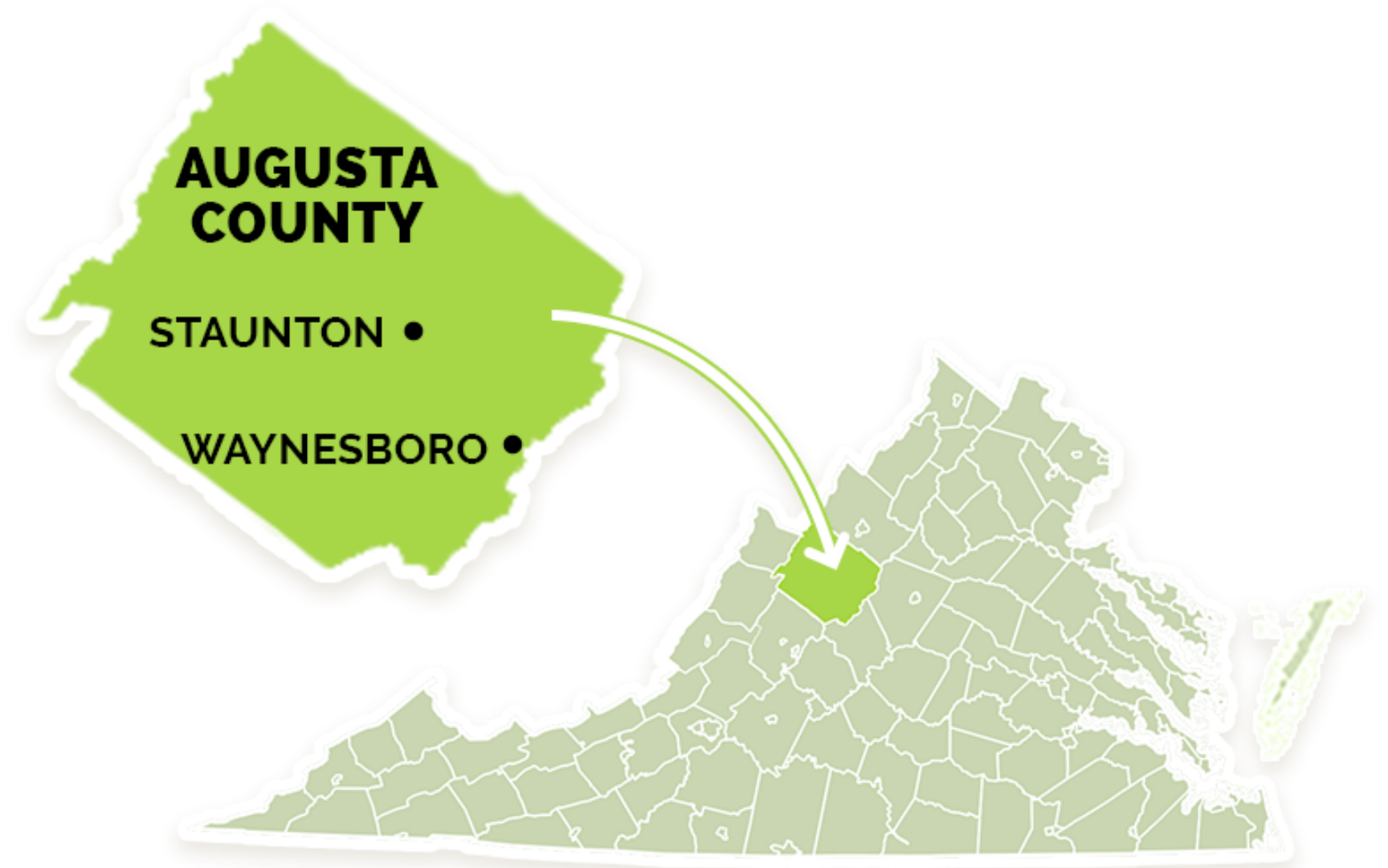
Median Household: \$65,581\*

## Augusta County

Population: 77,487\*

Size: 971 sq. mi.

Median Household: \$82,049\*



\* [census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

# Timeline

- Thursday Evening 8/14
  - Break in 16-inch main around 8:35pm
  - Resident calls 911 @ 8:48pm
  - Fire Department notifies Public Works @ 8:57pm
  - Work begins on isolating and repairing break
  - Public Works notifies ODW



Home > Staunton | Review Of Boil Water Advisory Finds No Contamination, 900 More Alert Subscribers

HEALTH, LOCAL, PUBLIC SAFETY

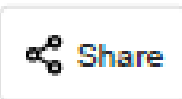
# Staunton | Review of Boil Water Advisory finds no contamination, 900 more alert subscribers



Rebecca Barnabi

Published date: September 2, 2025 | 8:16 pm

Updated: September 2, 2025 | 8:27 pm



The night of August 14 led to a nightmare situation for **Staunton Public Works** but a dream come true with community response throughout the weekend.

The city's review of the incident and emergency planning will continue.

"It would be great if we could predict breaks like this. We can't. In retrospect, I am placing the probable time of the actual break at about 8:35 p.m. Thursday night [August 14]," **Staunton Director of Public Works Dave Irvin** said Thursday night to **Staunton City Council**.

Irvin said data from the city's water plant from the evening began with normal results, however, lights do not flash and sirens do not sound when a city's water system experiences an emergency.

## LOCAL

**Staunton | Habitat built her home; she's still fighting to break out of poverty**

CRYSTAL GRAHAM  
SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

**Albemarle County | Shooting leads to pursuit, arrests of two juveniles, with one still at-large**

CHRIS GRAHAM  
SEPTEMBER 2, 2025

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said. Staunton Fire Department immediately responded, discovered the situation and notified Public Works at 8:57 p.m.

A water pipe 16 inches in diameter, one of the two largest-sized main pipes in the city's water system, was spewing water and creating a large pool of water that existed," according to Irvin.

Public Works staff worked to determine which of the two pipes was the source. "So, this was a major event," Irvin said.



Back at the city's water treatment plant, water was released within an hour at a rate of 16 million gallons of water per day. An average day in Staunton sees only 4 million gallons of water used.

"And even at this time of night, on a Thursday night, it's probably closer to 3.5 million gallons at that point. So, considerable amount of flow," Irvin said.

In the early morning hours of Friday, August 15, Irvin said that he and other Public Works staff began making phone calls about the situation to Augusta County and to Staunton schools.

The Virginia Department of Health was notified within 40 minutes of Public Works becoming aware of the water main break per a state law which went into effect July 1, 2025 that municipalities must notify the department of all water main breaks within two hours. State laws mandate that municipalities must keep city water systems pressurized at 20 PSI. The pressure of the system and water storage tanks provide a buffer in the event of a water main break so that a Boil Water Advisory is not always necessary.

However, the pressure in Staunton's water system dropped too low and required an advisory by Friday morning for all residents.

"In this particular case, it was very agonizing in the early morning hours Friday morning to sit and watch our SCADA system knowing the guys were out there fighting the good fight. I saw our discharge from the plant drop from 16 million gallons a day to 13 million gallons a day to 11 million gallons a day to 9 million gallons a day," Irvin said.

Discharge stalled at 9 million gallons and Irvin knew the situation was leading to a Boil Water Advisory.

By early Friday morning, Public Works staff had repaired the broken water main pipe on Stockard Street and a city-wide Boil Water Advisory notice was issued. The water pressure was beginning to resume since the repair and testing of the city's water began at intervals as city staff set up emergency water distribution sites at Bessie Weller Elementary School, Staunton High School

The most recent similar event to what happened that August weekend was in 2007 and was called the "Cherry Hill" incident. Irvin was made aware of it when he joined the department in 2010 because it had been so significant for the city. A 16-inch transmission main pipe broke and it took city staff more than 12 hours to turn off the city's water system.

"Water loss in 2007. I don't really have numbers to compare, but I imagine it was similar to this

ulations to protect public health and safety and the

ituation was efficient and timely with a focus on public were learned to improve response next time.

ees were trained to venture out and take water samples, employees will be trained. Irvin said that training began on

hydrants because pre-designated sampling stations were morning hours. The city will consider adding sampling time in the future.

s layers, and has learned of more state agencies who can emergency.

have some action plan activities," Irvin said. One activity is to update the database.

The subscriber base of the Staunton Alert Message was

about the cause of the water main break.

# Timeline

- Friday Morning 8/15
  - ODW Lexington provides technical assistance to Public Works
  - System pressure continues to drop
  - D. Roadcap emails CSHD @ 3:30am
  - City Emergency Management notifies VDEM and opens EOC
  - CSHD becomes aware w/ school closures @ 7am
  - Social media reports of low pressure and brown water

# Timeline

- Friday Morning 8/15 (continued)
  - Staunton emergency alert for BWA @ 7:24am
    - Citywide due to complexity of mapping
    - Some consecutive waterworks in Augusta County included
  - CSHD notification to NVERS, OEP, VDACS
    - NVERS notifies healthcare partners
  - Water distribution at three sites
  - Coordination call @ 9:30am
    - City, VDEM, and VDH

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HEALTH, LOCAL

# Staunton: City to evaluate response to water main break, notification to residents



Rebecca Barnabi

Published date: August 20, 2025 | 6:30 pm

Updated: August 21, 2025 | 11:43 am

Late Thursday night, a resident on Stocker Street, a residential area on a hill near Gypsy Hill Park, heard running water behind their house.

Staunton Public Works staff arrived on the



“So they got out there and figured out what they were dealing with,” Staunton Engagement & Communications Manager Josh Knight said of what turned out to be a water main break that created a **Boil Water Advisory** for the **Queen City** until Monday morning.

Public Works staff found a leak in a 16-inch diameter cast iron water pipe underground.

“The pressure was so great that it almost self excavated,” Knight said of the water leak.

Staff replaced that section of the pipe. Cast iron is “typical of pipes in that area and of that era,” Knight said.

Other city staff set in motion the city’s notification system to residents that city water was not safe to drink until further notice. Knight said that the [Staunton](#) alert message sent texts and calls to registered phone numbers, then the **Boil Water Advisory** was posted on the city’s website, which then also was sent out in the city’s newsletter to 2,000 email subscribers, and a post was shared on the city’s **Facebook** page, which was shared 600 times.

Knight said that in such a situation the city sends notifications in multiple ways because it is important that residents find out what is going on. He said he apologizes if some residents were frustrated about how they found out about the advisory, but it was important that they did find out either by text alert, email or social media.

“I think we have an opportunity now since this happened,” Knight said of city staff planning to have a conversation about the best way to notify residents.

Staunton residents are encouraged to sign up for text alerts [online](#). Residents need not worry that they will receive a lot of text alerts from the city. Knight began his position with the city in January 2024, and the water main break on Thursday night was the first time it was used since he moved to Staunton.

“We’ll continue to try to spread the word in as many ways as possible,” Knight said.

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to

# Timeline

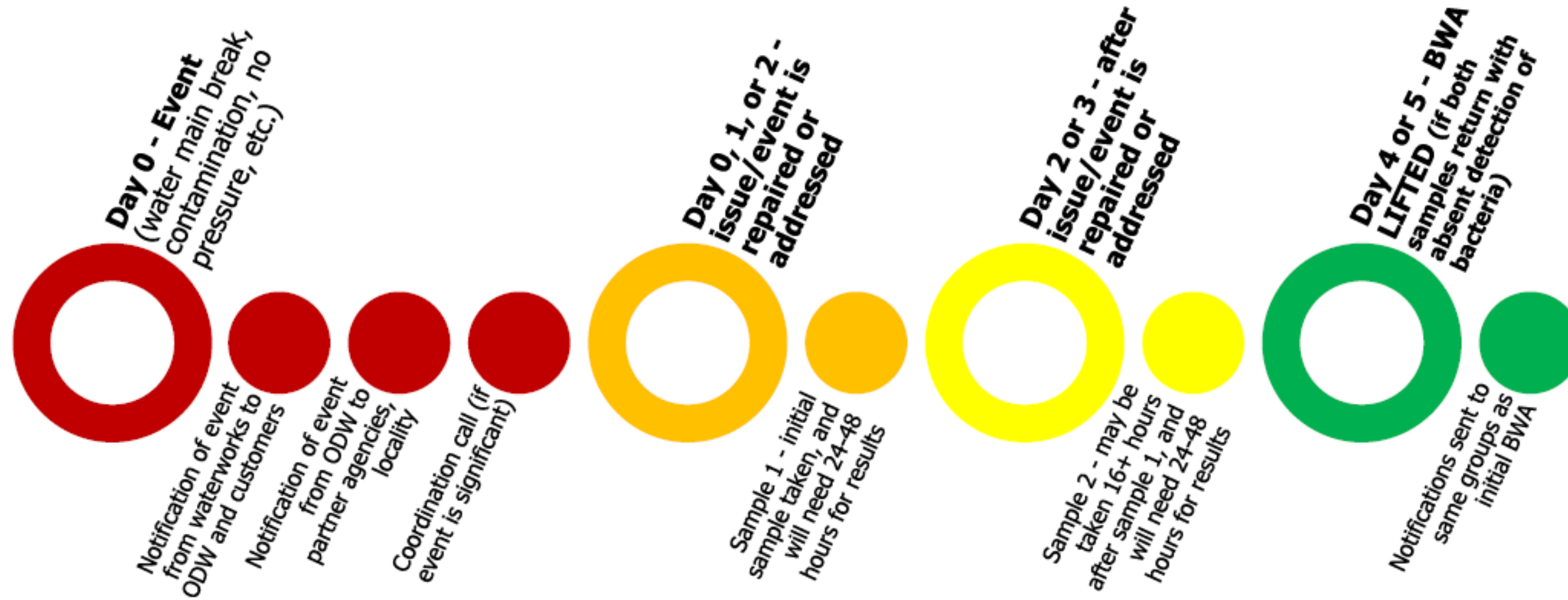
- Friday Morning 8/15 (continued)
  - Repairs complete, pressure building in system
  - Emergency services canvassing
  - Communications collaboration between City and CSHD

# Timeline

- Friday Afternoon 8/15
  - City and CSHD address reports of BWA confusion
  - Additional consecutive waterworks included
    - Included regional jail, industrial park, Grade A dairy plant
    - Augusta EM notified
  - First bacteriological samples

## Boil Water Advisory (BWA) Timeline – Example

(Actual timeline will vary depending on the specific water emergency)



# Timeline

- Friday Evening 8/15
  - Pressure continues to build in system

# Timeline

- Saturday Morning 8/16
  - All zones operating w/ normal flow and pressure @ 7:30am
  - Final samples from first set collected late morning

# Timeline

- Saturday Afternoon 8/16 through Sunday Morning 8/17
  - Second set of samples collected

# Timeline

- Sunday Afternoon 8/17
  - Both sets of samples from lower elevation zones pass @ 3:30pm
    - Consecutive waterworks BWA lifted
    - City remains in BWA
  - Remaining samples from higher elevation zones still in processing

# Timeline

- Monday Morning 8/18
  - Samples from higher elevation zones pass @ 10:10am
    - BWA terminated for City

# ESF-8 Coordination

- Pathways for communicating BWA identified
  - CSHD Environmental Health contacts regulated establishments
  - NVERS fields healthcare questions
  - City remains lead on public messaging
  - Direct outreach to vulnerable populations
- Augusta Emergency Management
  - City = public waterworks
  - County = collection of smaller private waterworks
- Joint Information Center
  - CSHD and City Government
  - Direct access to executives

# After Action Progress

- Solicited survey responses from all stakeholders
- CSHD hosted ESF-8 Hot Wash
- Participated in City Hot Wash
- Drafted and distributed AAR based on PHEP Capabilities
  - *Cap. 3: Emergency Operations Coordination*
  - *Cap. 4: Emergency Public Information & Warning*
  - *Cap. 6: Information Sharing*
  - *Cap. 11: Nonpharmaceutical Interventions*
  - *Cap. 12: Public Health Laboratory Testing*
  - *Cap. 13: Public Health Surveillance and Epidemiological Investigation*

# After Action Process

- Strengths
  - Early and effective emergency operations
  - Transparent and multichannel public communications
  - Strong communication and collaboration between Staunton and ODW

# After Action Process

- Areas for Improvement
  - More complete common operating picture between/among stakeholders
  - Consistent and timely notifications to partners and public
  - Develop standardized tools and preparedness infrastructure

# After Action Process

- Overall Analysis
  - Scale/scope
  - Impact
  - Contrast to Richmond events

## Contact

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# **VDH** VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

