



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Spencer Cronk, City Manager *sc*

DATE: October 28, 2018

SUBJECT: Next Steps Regarding 2018-10-16 Flooding Event

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Council an overview of next steps once Austin Water (AW) completes post-boil water notice maintenance and clean-up activities.

### Background

In early October 2018, the Lake LBJ and Lake Buchanan watershed basins received heavy rainfall amounts that caused significant flooding and damage to property along the rivers in those basins. The water from the rainfall drained into the Colorado River system such that the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) commenced flood operations in the Highland Lakes system, including Buchanan Dam (Lake Buchanan), Mansfield Dam (Lake Travis) and Tom Miller Dam (Lake Austin). AW commenced flood operations at Longhorn Dam (Lady Bird Lake) in concert with LCRA operations.

On Tuesday, October 16, the Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) Director stationed a Situation Assessment Team in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in support of Travis County flood response operations along Lake Travis and Lake Austin. On Thursday, October 18, I approved activation of the EOC in anticipation of LCRA opening four additional flood gates at Mansfield Dam. A briefing of this situation was provided to Council at the beginning of its meeting that day.

On Sunday afternoon, October 21, AW officials issued a statement requesting water customers reduce consumption due to challenges in maintaining water production capacity. Sunday evening, the need to issue a precautionary boil water notification including an emphasis for water consumption reduction was made. The notification was issued early Monday morning, October 22. On Tuesday, October 23, drinking water turbidity leaving AW's Ullrich plant exceeded regulatory requirements at which point a boil water notice for consumption became mandatory by State statute.

On October 28, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) issued Austin Water an approval to rescind the boil water notice. This rescind order was based on TCEQ's

comprehensive review of Austin Water's drinking water system including turbidity data, disinfection system performance, distribution system pressures, and water quality sampling results.

## Next steps

Over the next 10 to 14 days, AW will be performing system-wide operational checks, maintenance, and plant cleanup and washdown activities. In addition, the Utility will take steps to see that staff most impacted by the response to this event receive adequate rest and downtime to recover. In parallel, HSEM will coordinate the demobilization of water distribution centers, and finalizing record keeping in the EOC. HSEM will also be coordinating the recovery phase of the disaster, which includes requesting reimbursement of flood-related expenditures from state and federal agencies.

As with any significant emergency when the EOC is activated, the National Incident Management System provides guidance for the completion of an After Action Report (AAR) and a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). These documents help us improve and prepare for the next emergency. HSEM coordinates the development of these documents, which will begin shortly after AW completes its activities described in the preceding paragraph.

This is a comprehensive review that will include internal and external communications, decision-making, resource deployment, emergency procurement, staff coordination and other areas. All City and County departments, educational agencies, hospitals, non-profit and other partners participate in the process. By way of example, AARs were completed for the October Halloween Floods of 2013 and 2015, as well as the Memorial Day Flood of 2015.

In addition to its participation in the AAR, Austin Water will conduct its own in-depth review of its operations. This review will include an analysis of the raw water factors that contributed to this upset event (turbidity loads and makeup, duration, water pH and alkalinity changes) as well as a review of plant process system performance. AW will reach out to LCRA and TCEQ for their input as part of this review and include outside engineering firms and water treatment experts to support the review work. The Utility will report out its findings and provide recommendations to improve drinking water treatment systems resiliency. Special emphasis will be placed on identifying action steps that can be taken in the very short term to strengthen the drinking water treatment systems response to raw water upset events of this nature.

I will schedule an overview of the review process at an upcoming work session to provide an opportunity for staff to respond to questions Council may have.

cc: Executive Team

Juan Ortiz, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director

Doug Matthews, Chief Communications Director