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City of Downey

Press Release

STATE LIFTS "BOIL WATER ORDER" IN MOST OF DOWNEY

After test results remain negative, the State lifts precautionary order except in small southeast neighborhood

Downey, CA, September 28, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.: The State of California has lifted the precautionary "Boil Water Order" for the majority of the City of Downey. A small portion of the City (105 freeway on the north, Bellflower Avenue on the east, the southern city limit on the south, and including Fidler Avenue on the west), remains under the order as a precautionary measure. The Order was lifted for the majority of the City after several consecutive tests returned negative results for the "total coliform bacteria" test indicator. While City Officials are still investigating the cause of the problem, many experts acknowledge the ultimate cause of the positive test results may never be determined.

"As unfortunate and frustrating as the "Boil Water Order" was for the entire Downey community, precautionary measures were implemented to ensure the safety and well being of all Downey residents," stated Mayor David R. Gafin in a follow-up interview. "The entire response from start to finish will be reviewed as a result of this incident," he goes on to state.

The precautionary "Boil Water Order" was issued after positive results for "total coliform bacteria" were received from a few locations in the water system. Experts have stated the mere presence of the "total coliform bacteria" poses no risk to humans. The positive results for the indicator merely alert officials that something more hazardous may be present in the system. Further testing failed to find anything more hazardous in the water. Even though no truly hazardous pathogens were found in the water, the mere presence of the indicator bacteria results in the implementation of standard operating procedures, which include the issuance of the precautionary "Boil Water Order." This order was hand delivered to residents in the area immediately surrounding the positive tests. "Notifications were made as soon as results were verified and the affected neighborhoods identified," said Public Works Director Brian Ragland.

Mayor Pro Tem Mario Guerra points out, "The safety of our residents is our number one priority during events like the one which occurred during the past few days. Throughout the entire event, the City was in constant contact with our schools, our hospital, and the media." When asked if he thought the system was compromised, Mayor Pro Tem Guerra answered, "I drank the water from my tap this morning, and so did my family."

When asked, Councilmember Kirk Cartozian indicated, "The entire testing process is susceptible to error, which is why a positive test must be reconfirmed through additional testing before even a precautionary warning is issued." When asked if he feels the City was overly cautious in dealing with the situation, Councilmember Cartozian said, "The City, County, and State follow very strict protocols when dealing with water systems, although the possibility exists that false alarms can and do occur, the City will always err on the side of caution in situations such as these."

For additional information, please call the City of Downey's Public Information Office at 562-904-7286 or visit Downey's website at www.downeyca.org.

For Immediate Release