

## October 2019 Newsletter

Please submit questions/comments to [info@sallal.com](mailto:info@sallal.com)

### Changes to our Water

#### **Boil Water Advisory**

As a reminder, Sallal lifted the Boil Water Advisory, and testing results confirmed the water SAFE TO DRINK on October 2, 2019. If for some reason you are just finding out, perhaps returning home from vacation, please contact Sallal and/or go to our Website for instructions on how to sanitize your home internal water distribution system.

Now that the incident is closed out, Sallal will prepare an After-Action Report/Improvement Plan as an important step to learn from the incident, improve plans and facilities, final close-out action(s) including those with government regulators and response activities in the future.

#### **Disinfection**

Due to the E. coli hits in our system and the water sample from Well #2 that tested positive for E. coli last month, the Department of Health (DOH) required Sallal to 1) disinfect all source water and 2) maintain a chlorine residual in the system. These requirements for disinfection must continue until we can prove to DOH that disinfection is not required. Well 2 is offline. All water is being supplied by Wells 1 and 3. We do not have a complete understanding right now of what processes will be necessary to prove to DOH that the well is not contaminated, the costs involved, or how long it all might take. However, DOH has told us that chlorination will be at least 12 months.

Right now, we are focused on complying with the DOH requirement for "4-log virus treatment" to build "contact time" into the system at Well #2, which means that the water must have six minutes of contact with chlorine concentration of 1 ppm (the product of chlorine concentration times contact time;  $CT \geq 6$ ) before it enters a member's property. We may need to replace existing pipe on Cedar Falls Road near Well #2 with a larger pipe to meet this requirement. UV or Ozone treatment may be options for Well 2 but a chlorine residual will still be required in the whole system. We need to move as quickly as possible in order to get Well #2 back into production before it is needed this spring. Regardless of the method of disinfection used, initial estimates to cover the costs of the required compliance with DOH are currently ballparked between \$573,000 to \$830,000. Unfortunately, we need to choose a disinfection solution to comply. Our choices now will be in which method(s) we choose (all include chlorine residual in the system), and *later* we will have choices about what we might be able to do to return to untreated water. Future impacts to member rates will be estimated and communicated in early 2020.

#### **Can we go back to untreated water?**

We will be having more discussions with DOH regarding Sallal's options and will share this information with the members in future newsletters as we learn more. As an example of what might happen, a King County Water District recently went through something similar but only had one routine sample show E. coli in their source water. They had to develop a Best Management Practices Plan, an extensive sampling plan for HPC and coliform, and had to chlorinate. (HPC – Heterotrophic Plate Count, is a method that measures overall bacteria in drinking water systems.) After 3 years of making

improvements and implementing numerous new practices and testing procedures, the Department of Health finally gave approval to that water district to discontinue the chlorination.

We should all expect that Sallal's water will be chlorinated for **at least** a year.

Once we have gathered all information on what would be required, what it would cost, and how long it could take, our Member Advisory Committee will likely be putting out a survey to members to get your input on what your priorities are regarding treated water, costs, and associated risks.

### **Chlorine smell**

An odor may be noticeable right now while we are aiming to maintain a 1 ppm residual level of chlorine in our water system. Staff have been recording between 0.5 and 0.9 ppm in the system. DOH requires a minimum of 0.2 ppm of chlorine residual. The long-term target level for Sallal will be 1 ppm at the wells with residual levels throughout the system between 0.4 and 1 ppm, depending on location. Staff are monitoring chlorine levels daily and continue to make necessary adjustments to the chlorine pumps as they learn what dosage is needed to maintain the required residual. This is likely to reduce noticeable odor going forward.

In addition to adding a specific filter to your faucet, there are several low-cost or free methods for removing the chlorine from your drinking water. While Sallal cannot endorse or verify any of these methods, you can find them easily through an internet search.

### **Chlorine byproducts**

*\*Correction to a statement in the August Newsletter, in which we said chlorine "does not cause other pollutants in the water to increase".* Corrected information: while chlorine does not increase arsenic levels (the concern at that time), it does react with naturally occurring substances to form compounds known as disinfection byproducts (DBPs). The most common DBPs formed when chlorine is used are trihalomethanes (THMs), and haloacetic acids (HAAs). Water systems using water sources with higher amounts of organic substances will form more DBPs when disinfected than those that do not.

Groundwater, especially those from deep wells, tends to contain little organic substances. Since Sallal's source is from (deep well) groundwater, we can expect lesser amounts of these byproducts to be present. Details can be found at this DOH

website: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/Disinfection/DisinfectionByproducts>

More information on the safety of chlorine in drinking water can be found at this DOH

website: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater/Disinfection/ChlorinationofDrinkingWater>

### **Water Quality**

The E. coli problem was found due to routine bacteriological sampling that is conducted in 16 different pressure zones throughout the Sallal system every month. Sallal maintains 27 sampling sites. Each month, seven different locations are sampled; and each site is sampled quarterly.

Sallal performs more sampling than what is required by DOH. Had we only done what was required, we likely would not have caught this E. coli as soon as we did. The last time E. coli was found in Sallal's water system was 2005. The 2017 and 2018 Annual Water Quality Reports can be found on the Sallal Website at: <https://sallal.com/water-quality/>

### Finding the Source

As DOH stated at the emergency Members Meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup>, the source of these types of incidents are rarely ever found. This was the case with Covington, Issaquah, Carnation, and Mercer Island when they had E. coli events. Finding the source does not ensure this kind of event couldn't happen again as a different cause or source could arise any time. We could spend a lot of money searching for the cause with little to no return on that investment. If the source was in the aquifer, it would be virtually impossible to find the source. Sallal will have to consider what we stand to gain against the cost to members of pursuing a source that may never be found.

Sallal completed a routine sanitary survey required by DOH in mid-June with no significant findings. Regardless, prudent management dictates continued testing of Well #2. We will be monitoring and sampling this well at least monthly. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, the Board supported a motion to spend up to \$10K to complete a full inspection of Well #2 which includes video inspection into the well.

### Backflow And Cross-Connects

A cross connection is any connection to the public water supply that has the potential to backflow water from a facility or home into the distribution system. If flow is reversed from the intended direction, a cross connection could contaminate the system.

The Safe Water Drinking Act of 1974 and the Washington Administration Code 246-290-490 requires all public water systems in Washington State to operate an on-going Cross Connection Control Program to protect the public water supply from contamination from possible cross-connections.

The Sallal Water Association adopted a cross-connection control program in 1998 with the goal of premise isolation. The Association is not responsible for eliminating or controlling cross-connections within the customer's water system. The goal of the Association's Cross Connection Control Program is to prevent non-potable water from returning into the public water system.

Sallal staff evaluates every residential and commercial connection served by our system and determines, based upon regulatory requirements, if backflow protection is needed and if so, the type of backflow prevention required. The Association has the right to deny service to any member who does not install a backflow device if required, or if the member does not complete the annual testing on the backflow device. Annual notices are sent to all property owners reminding them of the annual testing requirements if they have a premise isolation backflow device.

More information on Backflow and Cross-Connections is available on the Sallal Website at:

<https://sallal.com/backflow-and-cross-connect-information/>

### Our Thanks

Sallal extends our deepest gratitude to the Snoqualmie Tribe for providing at least seven pallets of bottled water to our members as well as a free (and last minute) venue for the Emergency Member meeting last month.

Sallal also thanks QFC and Safeway for working with us to supply bottled water to members on behalf of Sallal at a discounted rate and keeping it in stock throughout the advisory.

In addition, Sallal is grateful to the City of North Bend for its provision of a recycle dumpster for the water bottles generated by this Boil Water Advisory as well as continued offers of assistance.

Sallal Board members and management would like to thank the four phenomenal staff that fielded constant phone calls and took countless samples until late at night, giving up their evenings, weekends, and days off to be here for our members through this challenge. The dedication these folks give is above and beyond the call, as they consistently rise to the occasion.

Sallal especially wants to thank all our members for their patience and support during the Boil Water Advisory. We recognize this event impacted members in various ways, ranging from inconvenience to serious health and financial impacts. Overall, members have been understanding, resilient, and creative in getting through the challenge. Staff and volunteers greatly appreciated the kind words of

	<p>support offered by members over the phone, e-mail, and in-person, some of which even included gifts of sweet treats to keep us all going! Sallal members are the best!</p>
<p><b>Sallal Updates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress on finalizing the new Water System Plan and the planned presentation of the draft at the October 15<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting was postponed to next month due to diverting meeting time to investigate options and costs analyses for seeking the source, getting Well 2 back online, and complying with Department of Health’s mandate for maintaining a residual of disinfection in the system.</li> <li>• Sallal met with the City of North Bend to continue negotiations on a proposed water supply contract on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Another meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 21<sup>st</sup>.</li> <li>• Sallal spent about \$23,000 at QFC and Safeway to provide bottled water to members.</li> <li>• For those members would like to donate towards this cost of bottled water, you can add your donation of any amount to your monthly bill payment. Please note that the additional amount is for the Bottled Water Fund.</li> </ul> <p>We have already received over \$2,000 in unsolicited donations from members! Huge thanks to each of you!</p>
<p><b>Member Editorial – By Anne Herman</b></p>	<p>We Sallal members were all affected by the recent contamination issues in various ways. I boiled many gallons of water, washed dishes by ladling that boiled water from a big pot, stopped by the QFC for bottled water, and put plastic bags over my faucets so as not to forget and drink the water. It was no fun, and it might be tempting to think we should be compensated for the impact.</p> <p>I’ve heard people say that we pay for a service and we didn’t get it, so our bills should be reduced. On the surface that sounds reasonable, doesn’t it? Here’s the thing, though. Where would that money come from?</p> <p>Sallal Water Association is a member-owned co-op, founded in 1969, with roughly 1,700 members. A co-op is not a corporation. There are no shareholders or corporate executives making huge profits. In a co-op, the profits and earnings are distributed among the members; in other words, because we members own Sallal, all of its expenses are ours. Already our bills are set so as to cover our expenses and keep Sallal running, no more.</p> <p>If Sallal, <b>our</b> co-op, were to reduce people’s bills, how would we make up for that lost revenue? We could do it by raising our bills next month, which makes no sense. We could ask some members to pay other members’ bills, which is hard to justify. In fact, though, some generous members have donated money to help with other members’ bills. The staff is in the process of figuring out how to fairly distribute those funds.</p> <p>Already Sallal is absorbing about \$23,000 paid to grocery stores for bottled water. That number would be larger, but Sallal board member Harold Ellebracht arranged for a donation of about seven pallets of water from the Snoqualmie Tribe. (The tribe also donated water to help with the vandalism event that occurred about a year ago).</p> <p>Sallal’s Member Advisory Committee recommended, and the board decided, that Sallal will not directly reimburse members for any expenses other than bottled water. If you have a claim that might be insurance-related, please contact Sallal for claim forms.</p> <p>I suggest we forget the inconvenience and pay our bills as usual, since we did receive and use water. We showered and flushed our toilets, etc.; we did use the service we pay for. Let’s remember that Sallal’s expenses are our expenses, because we own this co-op.</p>