



MEDIA RELEASE – For Immediate Release

April 1, 2008

For more information contact

Phone: 719-587-5223

Email: media@cc.alamosa.co.us

ALAMOSA OFFICIALS DISCUSS CITY WATER SYSTEM PROGRESS

Alamosa, CO – Members of the public and media outlets from across the state were in Alamosa Monday to hear reports from local officials and assisting agencies regarding continuing progress with the city’s water system.

Mayor Farris Bervig reported that the community is now under a Stage 2 (yellow) water alert. Residents can now begin taking brief showers in lukewarm water and also wash clothes. Citizens on city water should continue using bottled water for drinking and cooking.

The Mayor also noted the commitment from the community. Over 3,000 hours of assistance have been donated by 749 volunteers.

School Superintendent Henry Herrera announced that school had resumed Monday (March 31, 2008) morning. Herrera personally visited all six schools, and attendance is normal, with 97 to 98 percent of students in school. School maintenance workers have flushed all water lines, and have provided bottled water and hand sanitizer for students. Herrera encourages parents to avoid sending sick children to school. “If your child has symptoms, keep them home,” said Herrera. He also stated that graduation will continue as scheduled May 26, which is the Saturday before Memorial Day.

Health officials are asking that anyone with symptoms, like diarrhea, stay home until they have been free of those symptoms for at least 24 hours. The advice applies to children and adults alike, and is especially important for healthcare, childcare and food service workers. Hand washing remains a priority now, but should be a part of daily life at all times.

Fred Sanchez, Water Quality Investigator with the Denver Water Board, reported that the entire 49 miles of water distribution lines have been disinfected and flushed in just seven days instead of the originally estimated three months. Testing is continuing and residents will be notified when the system moves to Stage 3 (green), but an estimated date has not been announced. The “all clear” determination will be made by state officials.

The new water treatment facility is expected to come online in June, with testing expected to begin in May. The new plant will include a chlorination process. Chlorination will also continue under the existing system until the switchover is made.

Beginning today (April 1, 2008), two distribution centers will be in operation from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. to provide safe drinking water for those who needed. The centers are located at the old Kmart building and Boyd Park. Water distribution was discontinued at the San Luis Valley Regional Medial Center at the end of the day Monday, however recycling facilities will remain available at the hospital. Recycling bins are also available at both the distribution centers that are continuing service.

As of Monday at 1:00 p.m., there have been 326 total cases of salmonella reported, 90 confirmed cases and 13 hospitalized.

Vouchers from the Denver Salvation Army are available for Alamosa residents to receive paper products to reduce water use. The vouchers are being distributed at the La Gente Center, 2261 Enterprise Drive from 2 to 4 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 1 to 3 p.m. Fridays through April 10. Both the City Market and Safeway stores in Alamosa are accepting the vouchers. Residents can call Salvation Army representatives at 1-719-587-5404 for details including proof of residency.

Numerous local, state and federal agencies have responded to the incident, including:

Alamosa Fire Department, Alamosa County Nursing, Alamosa County Sheriff's Office, Alamosa County Management, Alamosa County Road and Bridge, Alamosa County Emergency Management, Alamosa Water Department, Alamosa Police Department, City of Alamosa Management, City of Durango, City of Ft. Collins, Costilla County, Homeland Security, Rio Grande County, Saquache County, Jefferson County Incident Management Team, Northwest Colorado Incident Management Team, San Luis Valley Regional EMS/Trauma Advisory Council, San Luis Valley Mental Health, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado National Guard, Colorado Department of Health and Environment, Denver Environmental Health, Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Emergency Management, Denver Water, Aurora Water, Boulder Water, Pueblo Water, Colorado Rural Water Association, East Cherry Creek Village, Red Cross, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services operating divisions to include the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information, please call the CO-Help line at 1-877-462-2911, which is staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week, or visit www.CityofAlamosa.org or watch Cable Channel 10. Information is also available in Spanish at www.cdphe.state.co.us/epr/AlamosaEspanol.html.

#30#

Released 2008-04-01 1217