

**EAST FELICIANA RURAL WATER SYSTEM
10270 Highway 10
ETHEL, LOUISIANA 70730**

**(225) 683-9698 FAX (225) 683-9610
eastfelicianaruralwater.com**

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April 1, 2017

Why is my water brown and do you really expect me to drink it!

Of Course Not!! In the past 30 days, East Feliciana Rural Water has been in the news media spotlight multiple times for what started out as a "Brown" water issue then progressed to a pandemic of "lead" contamination, and wrapped up with a cease and desist of parish wide fire protection. Now that all the facts are in, East Feliciana Rural Water is offering the following statement to reassure our consumers that EFRW's 1st priority is the safety of your drinking water.

On **Monday evening, February 20th**, there were 8 call-ins to EFRW's emergency hotline regarding low pressure. The on-call service technician immediately responded by assessing the Plank Road well, the water source for those complaints. An inspection of the well indicated no abnormalities. The service tech contacted the consumers filing complaints only to receive reports that the pressure was okay. The following morning, **Tuesday, February 21st**, EFRW's emergency hotline starting receiving calls regarding "brown" water in the same area as complaints from the evening before. While telemetry at the Plank Road well still showed no issues, crews were immediately dispatched to begin a search for a source to the problem, assuming there was a broken main line in the distribution system. After several hours of searching and still coming up empty handed, the 911 Dispatch was contacted to confirm any emergency responses which would have required high volumes of water usage. No emergencies were confirmed. A call was made to Parish Fire Chief McNabb to inquire on training classes or shuttle runs that may explain the source of our complaints. A brief conversation with Fire Chief McNabb confirmed that after maintenance work was complete at a hydrant on Hwy 67 the volunteer firemen opened the 4" cap on top of the hydrant to flow test the hydrant. The hydrant was allowed to flush for approximately 30 minutes. EFRW pulled Chlorine Residuals throughout the system to confirm that residual were at the DHH required level of .50ppm ensuring there was no risk for bacteriological contamination. The free chlorine residuals ranged between 1.22 - 2.00ppm. When a line breaks or when organic material enters a water system the free chlorine residuals are consumed. There was no indication that this occurred. No Boil Advisory was called because there was no risk for contamination and all residual tests were normal; therefore, posing no threat to the safety of the drinking water. On **Friday, February 24th**, as a precaution, a DHH Sanitarian pulled 5 water samples throughout the system and submitted them to a State Approved "**Drinking Water Certified**" lab. As we expected, on **Saturday, February 25th** the lab confirmed samples pulled by DHH the previous day were analyzed and were "negative" for microbiological contaminants. On **Wednesday, March 1st**, EFRW hosted a meeting. Among those participating were EFRW directors and staff, DHH Engineering & Sanitarian officials, East Feliciana Police Jury officials, and Parish Fire District Chiefs. The discussion addressed the cause for "brown" water, the possibility of structuring a flushing program, proper techniques for utilizing fire hydrants and reporting activities to EFRW, policies and procedures for activating a boil advisory, and ways to educate the consumers on the water process. This meeting was informative for all departments and reflected a team effort with all departments working together. But the roller coaster was still on track and on **Tuesday, March 14, 2017, an** email was received from DHH regarding a sample that had been submitted by a homeowner residing at 9923 Battle Road. The result levels indicated a lead level of 25.66 ppb which exceeds the action level of 15 ppb. DHH's letter stated that the "*collection process / technique was unknown*" and requested the EFRW arrange for a follow-up sample to be taken following the proper procedure. EFRW contacted DHH regarding the homeowner's address. The address provided in their letter **was not a**

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"homeowner's residence" but rather EFRW's Battle Road well site. This falsification triggered DHH to do a full background on the sample. It was then discovered that the sample had been submitted by Channel 2 News to a State approved lab in St. Rose which is **not certified to test "drinking water"**. DHH contacted the news media to establish the correct location of the sample so that follow-up sampling could be done, but the location for the sample was not disclosed until **Thursday, March 16th**, after Investigative Reporter, Chris Nakamoto was told on camera that his **"withholding of information could pose a health risk for consumers if his results were legitimate"**. Meanwhile, EFRW staff assumed that the sample had been pulled from the consumer that had been interviewed in a previous broadcast and preparations were made to pull investigative samples from this location per DHH request. On this same day, EFRW also took precautionary action by covering fire hydrants in the area with garbage bags and duct tape because a contractor for AT &T was caught trying to open a hydrant in the area in order to obtain water for their boring rig. **EFRW's 1st priority is to provide "safe" drinking water; therefore, it is a must that EFRW monitor who has access to our system and for what reason; otherwise, we make ourselves available to a "terror attack on a public water supply."** On **Friday, March 17, 2017**, a follow-up "Lead and Copper" sample was pulled according to proper DHH procedure which requires a minimum of 6 hours during which there is no water used from the tap where the sample will be collected and any taps adjacent or close to that tap to ensure that the necessary stagnant water conditions exist. Sampling should be pulled from a kitchen or bathroom cold water faucet. Contrary to these guidelines, based on the information provided, the news media drew its sample outside from a garden hose. Garden hoses are not approved for "human" consumption and have brass connections that may contain lead. As a precaution, EFRW collected additional samples upstream from this location. On **Wednesday, March 22, 2017**, test results for Lead and Copper samples taken on Friday March 17, 2017, were received from the lab. These results for both the initial sample location and the location upstream came back a 0 ppb for Lead.

EFRW is regulated by EPA and DHH to ensure that the water we distribute is safe for consumption. We test our water rigorously to make sure it stays this way, however, the water can become discolored before it reaches your tap. The two most common problems are when the water becomes brown or when it becomes cloudy and white. Both happen after the water has left the well head, either in the main distribution system or in domestic plumbing. EFRW has manganese naturally occurring in our groundwater. High velocity or a change in the velocity, speed at which water is moving, tends to stir-up mineral deposits that settle in the pipe. "Manganese is a mineral that naturally occurs in rocks and soil and is a normal constituent of the human diet. Drinking water can also sometimes appear 'milky' or 'cloudy' when first drawn from the tap. This is usually caused by air and generally disappears after a short time."

In a correspondence issued in October 2016, EFRW notified consumers of the mandatory routine sampling for Lead and Copper and the increase in the number of samples to be collected due to DHH's breakdown of EFRW's system into 6 PWS# (Public Water Supply). At this time EFRW asked for volunteers and offered account credits for those participating in the testing. Of the 3900 connections on our system, we only received 14 responses. This sampling is a DHH monitoring compliance for EFRW, but is most valuable to those consumers that reside in homes constructed between 1982 and 1988 that contain galvanized pipes, and lead soldered connections. EFRW's distribution system is constructed strictly of PVC pipe and poses no threat for "Lead" contamination.

While there are locks on some hydrants within parts of EFRW's distribution system, EFRW did not purchase and install them on the hydrants. The Fire Departments working those areas purchased and installed those locks for public safety and fire use. These departments monitor those hydrants, flush those hydrants, and perform periodic flow tests.

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All this has been done without ever interrupting service to our customers. We will learn from these Fire Departments and we will continue to work with other Fire Departments within the system to develop a similar procedure for proper hydrant use which will protect our consumers' drinking water while still providing them with fire protection. EFRW's distribution system is 45 years old. When it was originally designed, only minimum size lines were installed. The system has grown to 3900 customers and 300 miles of piping with the majority of the lines 4" or smaller. A "fire" distribution system requires a minimum line size of 6". Over the years, EFRW has done system improvements to upgrade line sizes on the main highways, but many of the side roads still have small 2" dead end lines with limited flushing capabilities. This limits fire department activities; otherwise, consumers are left with no water, low pressure, or brown water.

EFRW has spent the past 12 months preparing a preliminary engineering report and application for the purpose of submitting to RUS a request for a grant/ loan in the sum of \$9.2million dollars for system improvements. The improvements proposed are for an additional well and water storage tower on the east side of the parish, storage improvements on the west side of the parish, and upgrades to water mains. EFRW anticipates an approval and obligation of funds by RUS in the next several months, and hopes to see bids and construction under way in 2018.

By definition "Investigative journalism is a form of journalism in which reporters deeply investigate a single topic of interest, such as serious crimes, political corruption, or corporate wrongdoing. An investigative journalist may spend months or years researching and preparing a report." EFRW is a non-profit water system which is owned by its members. Contrary to reports, EFRW's Board of Directors and staff are not "inept", and consider the safety of our consumers' drinking water to be our 1st priority. EFRW is shocked that Channel 2 News Investigative Reporter, Chris Nakamoto, given EFRW's statements and his research of the facts, was unable to broadcast an informative report and for that EFRW apologizes to our customers. All of our documents are available for public view and interpretation, and EFRW is working with DHH and LRWA to develop a video that may be utilized throughout the state by water utility districts for the purpose of educating consumers. For those that have stood in defense of EFRW, her directors, and staff during this onslaught of bad information, we say thank you and together we will work toward a brighter future. And, if your water is "brown", we're not suggesting that you should drink it. We wouldn't drink it either, but color doesn't necessarily make it unsafe. It's just not very appetizing when we prefer crystal clear water! For years EFRW has utilized a BEN (*Better, Easier, Notification*) System which allows us to notify you of any problems related to your water services. If you haven't registered to receive these notifications, please do so right away!! Go online or call us today. We're your best source for accurate information.

In your service,

Richard King
President

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