

# Boil order continues for large chunk of city

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St. Joseph's Hospital.

SAINT JOHN – About 45,000 city residents remain under a boil order, with an end still days away, after a pipe break Tuesday morning prevented the chlorination system from properly disinfecting the water supply east of the Reversing Falls Bridge.

City spokesperson Nancy Moar said two storage tanks were completely drained and re-filled with treated water on Tuesday, while another set of two tanks had to wait until Wednesday, as the

untreated water had yet to reach the area.

“We are waiting for confirmation that all the untreated water is flushed from the system before we begin sampling,” she said.

She didn't give an updated timeline as to when the boil order may be lifted; Saint John Water officials said on Tuesday the order would last at least until Friday.

Moar did point out that two consecutive, clean bacteriological samples must be collected a minimum of 24 hours apart before the order can be lifted. Results from samples are only received another 24 hours after they're submitted.

She said the costs incurred by the city due to the broken pipe and subsequent boil order haven't been determined, but pointed out that work is being done entirely by city crews.

The break occurred near the Lakewood Heights Pump Station, and officials believe long-term corrosion may have been the culprit that caused the 24-inch pipe to fail.

Brenda Kinney, the executive director of the Saint John Regional Hospital with Horizon Health, who also oversees operations at St. Joseph's Hospital, said the facility's operating rooms, urgent-care centre and outpatient services were all running as normal Wednesday morning. Water-pressure issues caused a partial shutdown at the hospital on Tuesday.

While the Regional has its own water reservoir, St. Joseph's remains under the boil order, which causes headaches for staff, Kinney said, adding the most immediate impact is felt in the hospital's endoscopy suite.

“There's a significant amount of cleaning that takes place between different procedures, and a result of the boil order, we can't do it as we normally do and have to revert to sterile water. It slows the whole process down, to where we're really only doing the urgent cases,” she said.

Large amounts of bottled water are brought in for drinking, while sterile water is used for cleaning. Any machines that use direct tap water, such as ice-machines, are also off limits. There are also extra costs associated with boil orders, Kinney said.

“It's probably not huge, but the more of these we have, the more costs that will be incurred. When you hear about the infrastructure being from the 1800s, you have a sense that it's probably not the last one.”

The hope is that a new modern water treatment plant and pipe system will put an end to water issues and boil orders, a common occurrence in a city with water infrastructure over a century old. City Deputy Water Commissioner Kendall Mason said the broken cast iron pipe that led to the boil order may have been in place since 1873.

The \$230 million upgrade project is expected to be completed by 2018.

Saint John Board of Trade executive director David Duplisea is looking forward to a new water system. He acknowledged boil orders as a problem that creates extra costs and work for those in food service, with city restaurants and coffee shops stocking up on bottled, purified water to keep business going smoothly.

“But our view on this is that, with the funding now in place for our water infrastructure improvements, it’s a problem that’s soon going to be a thing of the past,” he said.

“It’s one of those issues that’s been around for a long time, but we don’t hear about it too much and I don’t think it’s top of mind for our members. I’m thinking more about the wonderful news moving forward.”

Until the boil order is lifted, the city advises residents in affected areas to bring water to a rolling boil for at least a minute before considering it safe for drinking, cooking or brushing teeth. Washing dishes, using dishwashers and showering with hot water and soap is still considered to be safe.