



JOINT BASE WATER DAILY UPDATE

Joint Information Center

(808) 471-5013

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[2/18/2022]

Capt. Guenther 0:11

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the daily water update for February the 18th. I'm Captain Darren Gunther, Chief of Staff for Navy region Hawaii. Thanks for watching. We hope that these are informative and helping you stay up to date on events as they happen.

The testing results from more zones are in and under review, we're working hard to restore the water back to your homes. Keep in mind that this process is sometimes a slow one. And we're working with our partners on the inter-agency drinking water team. That's the Department of Health as well as the Environmental Protection Agency.

That process is meant to ensure safe and thorough look at the water and sometimes that means it's slow, but also methodical. So today, we've invited back Capt. Miguel Dieguez to the program to discuss how that process works, and where we got how we got to where we are today. But before we bring him on, let's go to the map and look at our progress. This chart is posted on our water resources website as well as our data page, and you can go to it for these updates there, including some of the estimated resident return dates, which are estimates, but trying to give you an idea of when events like movements might happen.

So Red Hill is green on our map. It's been that way for a couple of days, and I'm happy to say that our returning residents and the move in is complete. So thank you to those residents. Thank you for your patience, and we are still standing by and task-force Ohana is still standing by to field any of your questions and concerns via their phone numbers which are on those websites. Pearl City Peninsula is a next in the queue.

As we've been talking about this on Tuesday. That was the 15th that full package of sample testing results from the drinking water distribution system as well as from the homes and facilities was passed on to the Department of Health, takes them approximately seven days to look through all of that data probably over 1000 pages or more and make their decision and assessment. So that's where we're at with Pearl City Peninsula, and then we have some progress on a few more zones.

Getting the full data packages received that sample tests back from the labs on the mainland, and our inter-agency drinking water team is looking and assessing those packages currently in order to make their recommendations, follow on recommendations to the Department of Health. So they're working currently Hokulani, Hale Koa they will be sort of first in the queue from those groups of samples, and then next Ford Island, right those neighborhoods are probably the closest we've talked about under review for Hale Na Koa, Officer Field and Onizuka housing there on Hickam, that main area on Hickam also results at the Inter-agency Drinking Water Team and under review, and new for today we got the rest of the results for Moanalua terrace. That's our NEX area as well, and the team will begin going through those results here today. That's our map update for today. Okay, what I'd like to do now is bring in Capt. Dieguez, as you know, earlier this week, we had a pretty big milestone.

That's our first neighborhood which is Red Hill. We call it a zone I1, that went green on the Department of Health's amendment of the water, and hopefully we're gonna see more of these



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coming soon. and we see a lot of batches of the test results that are at the Inter-agency Drinking Water today, and that team's looking at them. I think there's four zones all together, and so it's good to have Capt. Miguel Dieguez is back. He's a mechanical engineer. He's the Public Works officer for sub base, Kings Bay sub base in Georgia, and he's been really on the ground here since December as one of the key leaders in our water restoration program. So welcome back, Miguel.

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 4:47

Thanks, Darren. Good to be back.

Capt. Guenther 4:48

So since we last talked, we talked about Red Hill neighborhood going green, and how did we get there? You know, we talked about the process quite a bit. Now that we look back, can you review for us how we got there with Red Hill?

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 5:05

Yeah, it feels like it's been a long time. And I can imagine, for families, it has been a long time. I got here about 70 days ago, and got the opportunity to watch the process from the beginning, and what I can tell you, it's a tremendous amount of collaboration, a lot of hard work, and a lot of learning along the way, the scale and complexity of this response has been hard, hard to get our arms around, but when when in doubt, it gets back into the science, bringing the right experts together, understanding what we're trying to get to, and ensuring the rigor to get to that point is is never questioned.

So if you recall back, you know, the forming of the inter-agency team was a huge critical first step, and then the plans that they developed very quickly thereafter on how to recover the system. Sample what exactly we're going to sample for what levels do we need to attain to be considered safe again, and then working to the home flushing plan and the sampling of homes, in schools and non-residential buildings was were all significant milestones and allowing us to get to that plan, and immediately, when I first got here, we were talking about, we're going to try to have families back in their home with by the end of the year, right and, and here we are two months later, still working at it and working hard at it, but ensuring that the science is based on ensuring that what we are trying to accomplish can be not just hit the I believe button and be able to be fully transparent, but working through the system flushing making sure we have good water in the system and verifying that and then putting that good water into homes and certifying that that's those are safe is it's been a really long and deliberate process.

Capt. Guenther 6:49

Yeah, it seemed like it took a long time, and I recall those discussions of really wanting to get our families back and getting the water certified even by the New Year, and that certainly, you know, did not happen. Talk about can you talk about you know, it seemed like there were some starts and some stops? Was it just because, you know, the process was being learned along the way? Why did it take so long?

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 7:19



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Yeah. So as we, as we got our arms around what we needed to accomplish as a as a interagency team. And as, as the Navy in the Army, there was a ton of resources, we need to we needed to fly in resources that weren't available on island, both in the form of personnel and experts, but equipment, and in flying that in and flying it in as aggressively as we can get it here as quickly as we could to get start the process. So I think what people saw is, we looked like we spent like three weeks building a plan, which is probably right, it took us a little while to get the equipment here, the GACs, famous GACs and getting them in place and working through the system. So it was hard and that we just couldn't flush the entire system, right, we had to work through it systematically, and with the confidence of Department of Health and EPA, that we were properly moving water through this system and flushing the system. That was the first huge, huge Herculean effort, and that took several weeks to do that and get the results that we were ready to begin the home flushing, and then there were 10,000 homes and another 1500 facilities, non-residential facilities that we had to work through, diligently and methodically to get those done right, and that took another several weeks. And now we're in this what appears to be a really quiet time, but there's a ton of work happening back in the mainland, with laboratories, and then the double, triple and sometimes quadruple checking of the data to make sure it's correct, to make sure it meets the criteria set by the EPA, and the Department of Health, and then putting that back in the hands of the inter-agency team so they can make a recommendation to Department Health ultimately.

Capt. Guenther 9:08

So how do residents gain trust back in the water?

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 9:13

Yeah, that's, that's something I've reflected on quite a bit. If I tried, I have friends that are here. So when the call came to respond, thinking about what they and their families were going through, and what it would take for them to trust in the water again, and I know that's a tall ask. It's gonna take time. What all I can share right now is that the process that was followed, and the transparency with which the results will be shared is, is important, and hopefully that begins to reinstall competence for our families, that the water is safe, and that we between the response teams we're going out right now and the long term monitoring we will do for the next two years. We will have to continue to demonstrate the water is safe, and families will hopefully begin to have confidence in the water again.

Capt. Guenther 10:05

Let me go back to the process. A question that we've heard out there. What was the difference when we were talking about flushing was the difference between system flushing in the In Home flushing that was done? This seems like two different phases. What was the difference?

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 10:20

Yeah, that's, that's a great question, Darren, from from a science perspective, that there is no difference there, the process is identical, where you're trying to move good water into into a system that you think may be contaminated. The difference is for the system, we, that's where we thought the contamination may be if there's any contamination in parts of the zone, but



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running that through the GAC s, and then dumping that into the storm drains, or in the case of Red Red Hill and Aliamanu Military Reservation, getting the permission to dump that right into the sewer drains, which is moving water from the Waiawa shaft, through the system and ultimately out of the system, and then that similar process with the homes where we were flushing water from, from the system into the drains, very similar process, just different different techniques to do it.

Capt. Guenther 11:11

So we have a lot of families coming back, who are anticipated to come back in all these various neighborhoods that are that are coming up, obviously Red Hill, those families have returned. A lot of their families are looking at that hopefully in the near future, and can they feel safe going back in their homes, can they feel safe, using the water in their homes when that time comes?

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 11:37

We want them to feel safe. So the important thing important fact I want to make today important point is the Department Health has sole discretion on when they just, when they determine that the water safe again, this is not an inter-agency effort to find a negotiated or a compromise. The inter-agency team will provide a recommendation, and then the Department of Health ultimately will comb through all that data again, review the lines of evidence, double check, quadruple check the result, if you will, and then when they're comfortable, and they think the water is absolutely safe is when they will amend their health advisory. So that thing that's step one, that that process, the process to get to there is is rightfully so hard, and that that hurdle to clear is high. But it doesn't stop there. Our work isn't done at that point. Today, we have both the Navy and the Army have response teams that if you call if you think you have a water quality concern today, whether you're whether your zone has an amended Health Advisory or not call and we will send a team to investigate and re-flush is required. We are going to do that. That's, that's step one, and continue to demonstrate that we think the water is safe. Step two is going to take the next two years, and that's that long term monitoring plan that that the Inter-agency Team put in place. So we'll take Redhill, for example. Their their zone cleared a week ago. Beginning this month, this 30 day period from when that amended advisory was was done. We have 5% More, we're going to sample this month, the next month, and the month after that. And then every six months there on in for two years, another 10% of those homes will continue to get sample, and that's us being forced to demonstrate the water continue to be safe for the next two years, and that is part of the overarching plan for how we recover this system.

Capt. Guenther 13:35

So if someone has their house tested, how can they see the results from from that testing?

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 13:42

Yeah. So I think for the residents I1 today, they can actually go on that safe waters website and see the litany of reports, we provided a kind of a summary document that tends to take what is



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hundreds of pages of lab reports and immediately difficult to read unless you're a chemist, and we've created a summary page, the Inter-agency Team has created a summary page summary report that explains what we tested for what were the results of those tests, kind of the ranges, and then attempts to explain why why we did all that, why we pick those those contaminants to look for and provide a summary, but all the hundreds and thousands of pages of lab reports by sample are all are all hung in the website as well, and that's just an opportunity to try to be transparent. People want to know, they can know and they can look at all that.

Capt. Guenther 14:30

Sure. Now as these families are coming back in if they have a question, you sort of refer to this team that's going out. I think we're calling it a rapid response team. If people have questions, or concerns when they do move back in, what is this team going to provide?

Unknown Speaker 14:48

So the you know the flushing process to be frank Darren flushing is that something that happens very often, whether it's in the system or in homes, so it's not uncommon for us to stir some stuff up as we were flushing the system, whether it was in the distribution system, or in the homes, and in the case of residents had had been displaced now for a few months for that water to just sit there not moving, those can all be to what appear to be water quality issues. So the purpose of the rapid response teams are to go out there to investigate what's happening what the residents are seeing, and to figure out how to fix that issue, and in the majority of water quality issues associated with what's going on right now, a refresh of the home will typically resolve it. So we can see it's maybe sediment was kicked up either in the water heater, or in the pipes or if water has been sitting stagnant, we say just been sitting in pipes in the house for a few weeks, it can start, the chlorine levels start degrading, and they can start seeing some what scientists called biofilm in the water, as you're pouring it out, it's not an unhealthy, but it's a flushing of the home again, and just moving the water restored the chlorine levels in that water, and it removes most of those issues, but the point of those Rapid Response Team is to help the resident to go there, talk to the resident about what they're seeing, figure out what's going to take the address it and then address it.

Capt. Guenther 16:15

Okay, so we do want our residents, you know, to reach out to these teams, if there are any concerns when they go back into their homes. And that's what that those teams are there for. They're there to work through these issues with those residents and ensure they understand what's happening, first of all, and then move forward.

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 16:33

And for us, it was really important that the folks that did the home flushing are the same folks. So there's chance you may see some familiar faces if you call, but it was important to keep that continuity to keep folks here that were familiar with the neighborhoods and what I'm familiar with flushing, we have so many different types of homes, that we're familiar with what those homes look like and how to flush the system appropriately. We kept them here and they're happy to be here supporting.



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Capt. Guenther 16:57

Okay, well, Miguel, thanks for coming back and thanks for being with us here for now going on three months without your family from Georgia, but really appreciate the expertise you brought to our community here in Hawaii and this really important work restoring the water.

CAPT. DIEGUEZ 17:14

Now like you said, Darren, it's my pleasure. This is really important. We got to get it right. Thanks.

Capt. Guenther 17:25

That was your daily water update for today. Please join us on Tuesday. Same time we're monitoring your questions on Facebook and you can also email questions to cnrhpa@gmail.com. Don't forget to check the water info website that's navy.mil/jointbasewater and check the latest water data at the jbphh-safewaters.org website and don't forget to the good stuff, especially this on a long weekend coming up at greatlife.hawaii.com/wegotyou. Please remember we're all in this together as one community and ohana. Stay safe. Take care of yourself. Take care of each other and we'll see you next time.