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California Village Is Without Running Water During Heat Wave

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By: Vanessa Serna

A Central California village where the temperature is expected to reach 105 degrees Fahrenheit on June 30 is out of running water as the state drought continues.

The crisis began in Teviston when a well—the Tulare County region's only water source—malfunctioned June 9, leaving its 600 residents without running water. It has yet to be repaired.

“The well failure in Teviston illustrates the difficulties facing single-source water systems during drought,” State Water Resources Control Board spokesperson Jackie Carpenter told The Epoch Times June 29.



Chris McMillan with AEI Transportation, talks with Loren Scott Denney as she fills a tanks with potable water during the installation of a 2,500 gallon tank in front of his house after his well went dry on May 25, 2021, in Madera, California. Loren Scott Denney received a 2,500 gallon water tank from Central Valley nonprofit community development organization Self Help Enterprises after his well went dry.

“Following an urgent request from the county, the state repurposed resources and supplies to address the situation through funding the community’s installation of a submersible pump in a previously abandoned well and arranging for both bottled and hauled water to be delivered.

“State agencies are working with communities to find these long-term solutions for small water systems. However, current drought conditions require local agencies and counties to prepare their emergency response now to future drinking water crises and determine what resources they will need.”

With hundreds of residents stuck with dry taps, households are relying on bottled water for drinking, buckets of water to flush toilets, and are traveling out of town to wash clothes and bathe with relatives and friends, Teviston Community Service District board member Frank Galaviz said during a press conference.

A Reoccurring Issue

The well became damaged when it developed a crack that allowed for sand to enter, Tulare County spokeswoman Tammie Weyker-Adkins said. Over time, the sand buildup destroyed the well’s pump.

The water source can and will be fixed, she told The Epoch Times.

The nonprofit Self-Help Enterprises is helping the village repair its well, said spokeswoman Jessi Snyder.

“The well is repairable,” Snyder said. “We are committed to doing it right. If we don’t fix the problem, with the well screens that allowed sand to enter, then we’ll just be back in the same place soon.”

A new pump will be installed, but not until well screens and a gravel pack that allow sand to enter is fixed.

This is not the first time Teviston has faced a water challenge.

“Teviston’s wells have a history of collapsing and struggling with sand soils,” Snyder said. “It’s a real design challenge. ... We are working hard to repair [the well] in the right way so that failures can be averted.”

Temporary Fix

Tulare County is assisting Teviston by implementing temporary fix measures until the well is functional.

In the interim, households are receiving up to 60 gallons of bottled water per month, hauled drinking water tanks that are pumped into the distribution system, and water from an old collapsed well that still produces water.

Non-potable water-filling stations were expected June 29 with the intention of keeping plants and animals hydrated.

To quickly address the water shortage, officials are meeting three times weekly. Tulare County has also provided Teviston with a resource management agency engineer who has been working to identify the necessary repairs.

Long-Term Solutions

Long-term plans to avoid future well breakdowns include the construction of a new one. Plans to build a new watering hole have been pending for the past few years, and once they are finalized, they will be sent to the state, Weyker-Adkins said.

The well’s design plans are nearly completed; funding to cover the cost is being identified.

Despite the new development, Galaviz said more must be done.

“It is absolutely critical that we address this by funding dams to conserve water [and] promote water system infrastructures,” he said.

To assist vulnerable communities, such as Teviston, Gov. Gavin Newsom is proposing spending \$1.3 billion for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, with a focus on small and disadvantaged communities. An additional \$27 million would be earmarked for permanent solutions to drinking water during drought emergencies, Carpenter said.

Officials said they were optimistic that the well will be repaired in the next few weeks.