



Water Works

February 2021



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Like many of our customers, CFPUA staff has followed the devastating winter storms in Texas.

In communities across the state, extended power outages affected drinking water treatment and distribution systems. By last

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weekend, nearly half of all Texans were under boil water advisories.

What does CFPUA do to help keep critical drinking water and wastewater services online during extreme weather? In this month's newsletter we highlight many of those measures, including changes we've made to emergency operations since Hurricane Florence in 2018.

One way to stay informed about CFPUA and severe weather is to sign up for emergency alerts through CivicReady.

It's free and easy to customize. Click below to sign up for alerts via text, email, or phone call:

[Sweeney Treatment Enhancements Project](#)

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CONTACT US

Customer Service: (910) 332-6550

Engineering: (910) 332-6560

Human Resources: (910) 332-6570

Water Conservation Hotline: (910) 332-6566

Water/Sewer Emergencies: (910) 332-6565

Email: communications@cfpua.org

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How CFPUA stays ahead of the storm



Since we opened our doors in 2008, CFPUA has regularly dealt with severe weather, from tropical storms such as 2012's Beryl to 2018's catastrophic Hurricane Florence.

When a storm is approaching, the first priority is ensuring our facilities' backup generators are running and have fuel on-hand. All critical CFPUA sites have emergency generators, either on-site year-round or that are dispatched to the sites ahead of severe weather.

In preparation for each hurricane season, CFPUA also leases additional fuel storage tanks for facilities, including our two water plants, two wastewater treatment plants, wastewater pump stations, and groundwater well sites. In the event of a massive power loss in our region, stored fuel capacity would allow these facilities to continue running for days – even more than a week at some sites.

CFPUA regularly reviews after-action reports – summaries of a utility's storm response – from across the country. The after-action reports created by FEMA and northeastern water utilities after 2012's Superstorm Sandy led CFPUA to create its emergency fuel contract to help keep plants running during inclement weather.

As reports emerge from Texas utilities, CFPUA will be looking to see whether lessons learned there could apply to our operations.

We also learn from our own storm experiences. During Hurricane Florence in 2018, power losses at CFPUA's emergency fuel supplier threatened the backup power supply at the Sweeney Water Treatment Plant. CFPUA was able to procure emergency fuel, and drinking water service continued uninterrupted for our community.

In 2019, we purchased our own 2,800-gallon fuel truck, as well as 15 100-gallon fuel saddle tanks that can fit in the beds of pickup trucks. These resources, in addition to CFPUA's emergency fuel contract, help keep our facilities fueled through the storm, even when the power goes out.



Among the steps CFPUA is taking to protect infrastructure is elevating equipment at wastewater pump stations. Staff recently created a tool to track flooding events at pump stations and identify sites in need of elevation. Protecting these stations will help ensure that severe storms don't interrupt customers' service.

Frozen Pipes 101



Prolonged severe winter weather is rare in the Wilmington area, but the occasional hard freeze does hit the region.

CFPUA maintains and repairs our community's public water system, the plumbing on private property is the owner's responsibility. Here are some pointers for preventing frozen pipes in your home or business:

Why can pipes break during a freeze?

If a pipe contains water when it is exposed to extreme cold, water inside the pipe can freeze, creating a blockage. Pressure differences in the pipe between frozen and unfrozen water, particularly while pipes are thawing, can cause the pipe to crack.

How can I protect my pipes?

Insulating pipes can help protect them from bursting during a freeze.

To help protect non-insulated pipes before a freeze hits, drain water from outdoor plumbing and wrap pipes, or allow a trickle of water to run through the system. In addition, temporarily turn off and drain irrigation systems.

Customers concerned about indoor plumbing can drip faucets and open kitchen and bathroom cabinets to allow warmer air to circulate around pipes.

Freezing temperatures can also damage backflow preventers. All commercial business water customers and homes with irrigation systems have backflow preventers, which keep irrigation water from contaminating the public water

supply. If you have a backflow preventer, protect it with a fiberglass cover. As an additional step, close the valves and drain water from the assembly. Just make a note to turn it back on in the spring.

What should I do if a pipe freezes?

Call a plumber to thaw your home's frozen pipes.

If a frozen pipe has burst, locate your home's main water shut-off valve to shut off water to your home. Repairs should be handled by a licensed plumber.

Employee Spotlight

Each month we introduce you to one of the more than 300 employees at CFPUA who work to provide you with the best water and wastewater services.



Erin Tremblay
Public & Environmental Policy Specialist

Name: *Erin Tremblay*

Birthplace: *Rockford, Illinois*

Department/Division: *Public & Environmental Policy*

Position: *Public & Environmental Policy Specialist*

Length of employment: *2 years, 11 months*

Briefly describe your typical day at work: *My overarching goal is to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the organization. For CFPUA, achieving sustainability means many things. It means being able to continue providing essential water and sewer services*

to our community in the face of climate change. It means being responsible stewards of the environment and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. It means ensuring our services are affordable. I contribute to these goals by conducting policy research, writing policy papers for the Board, and kickstarting projects like the Electric Vehicle Program and annual greenhouse gas inventories. So, each day is different. One day I might draft a paper on CFPUA's energy policy and the next work on improving CFPUA bill affordability.

What do you enjoy most about your job? *The thing I enjoy most is my work on affordability policy. We are working with CFPUA's Finance Department to make CFPUA's rates more equitable and collect data on the cost of living in our community. We also partner with community organizations like CFPUA Assist, the New Hanover County Department of Health and Human Services, and WATERway NC to help struggling customers pay their water bills.*

Tell us about one of your biggest accomplishments or challenges while working at CFPUA: *While the affordability work mentioned above is the most time-consuming and logistically challenging part of my job, it is also the most worthwhile part, because I know it helps people in our community.*

What advice would you give to recent new hires? *I would tell them that there is a lot to learn about CFPUA and to embrace the learning curve by getting involved in different projects whenever possible.*

What's one thing you'd want customers to know about your department, position, or CFPUA in general? *I'd like customers to know how hard CFPUA is working to integrate environmental resiliency into daily operations and organizational policies. I would also want them to know why we are doing it: for the environment and for them. Even departments like ours that don't have as much direct interaction with customers are always thinking about our customers.*

What do you like to do when you're not at work? *I love spending time with my friends and family (this includes my dog, Olive). I also like to cook, garden, practice yoga, immerse myself in nature and music, and read. When it comes to TV, I am an unashamed cheesy, rom-com fan and love a good drama. I also am currently enrolled in a Science Writing Certificate Program at UNCW.*

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Cape Fear Public Utility Authority
235 Government Center Dr