



ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

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MEDIA CONTACT: Angie Holdsworth (602) 542-0844

Commission to Investigate Water Company after Outage

(Phoenix) Corporation Commissioners are directing Staff to investigate Brooke Water LLC, a water system north of Parker, Arizona after customers experienced nearly a three-day outage in triple-digit temperatures.

Brooke Water operates 6 water systems and provides service to nearly 2,000 customers in La Paz County. A valve failure in the company's largest system, which serves nearly 800 customers, caused several breaks on the line which caused hundreds of customers to lose service.

At a special Staff Meeting on Monday, Commissioners and other county and state officials expressed concerns to the owner, Robert Hardcastle about lack of communication from his company.

"Because we were unable to communicate, people were getting ready to mobilize to take over the water system," said Chairman Doug Little. "We had to address some very serious concerns on behalf of county supervisors and emergency management and we have a responsibility to those agencies and officials. A little bit of communication would have gone a long way to making people feel more comfortable that the problem was being addressed."

Commissioners also heard from customers who expressed concerns about the age and reliability of the system, their service, and billing issues.

"I have some serious concerns with how someone with your (Mr. Hardcastle's) experience, ends up in this predicament," Forese. "The bigger picture is that this isn't the first time we have had a communications problem with you. I have a tremendous amount of concern that you are not concerned at the level you should be. Everything that I'm hearing is making me more worried."

Commissioner Tobin questioned the company's ability to afford repairs to infrastructure.

"The testimony we heard in this outage included a cancer patient who wasn't sure they had running water," said Tobin. "Someone has to stand for the customers. Six agencies tried to contact the company, and those calls were ignored. The company is also operating on a rate plan that is 27 years old. I'm concerned about how this company moves forward and what plans they have to deal with upgrading the systems and communicating with us and their customers."

Staff will meet with the Hardcastle and investigate the status of the company's equipment and operations to determine what, if any, further action the Commission may take. Staff will report back to the Commissioners with recommendations by September 22nd.