



# OREGON OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## STATEWIDE TALKING POINTS (6/17/21)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Westlake Chemical, based in Longview, Washington, recently suffered a major electrical failure and the company anticipates the plant being offline until the end of June at a minimum. Westlake supplies Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Northern California with chlorine chemicals used to disinfect drinking water and treat wastewater. The failed piece of equipment is in the process of being repaired at an off-site location due to the nature of the damage. Westlake is evaluating its options to bring the Longview plant back online and is actively working to help supply chlorine through the market, other Westlake plants or other means necessary to help alleviate the current supply shortage. On June 16, the Oregon Health Authority and Dept of Environmental Quality sent out a survey to all Oregon public water systems and statewide wastewater utilities to identify the status of chlorine disinfection chemicals and any immediate supply problems.

### CURRENT FACTS AND DETAILS

- Currently, tap water remains clean and safe to drink. The state is tracking for potential impacts, but there is no immediate change anticipated.
  - The public can continue to use water for drinking, cooking and bathing, but should limit outdoor use (i.e., watering lawns, filling swimming pools) to extend the chlorine supply in the state. There is no need to start amassing additional volumes of water.
  - The state is coordinating the current chlorine inventory and working with local entities to share the supply until Westlake's chlorine production resumes.
- A critical chlorine supply issue has recently created a shortage for Oregon and other West Coast utilities; it was caused by a major electrical failure at Westlake Chemicals, a chlorine manufacturing facility in Longview, Washington, that supplies chlorine for much of the West Coast.
- Chlorine is used to disinfect drinking water and treat wastewater.
- Water and sewer utilities are aware of the chlorine supply issue and are working with the state and other partners in taking proactive steps to solve the problem.
- This does not impact all Oregon water and sewer utilities; some utilities and local entities have their own on-site chlorine generators.
- Oregon utilities that are impacted are working directly with the Governor's Office, Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and utilizing Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (ORWARN) and federal authorities to get the chlorine supply they need.
- Together, Oregon utilities are inventorying needs across the state and preparing to share the remaining chlorine supply through mutual aid.
- It's not yet known how long the chlorine shortage will last. Many agencies are working together to address the situation for our state utilities, and we will keep the public informed of the situation as it develops.



## CONTACTS

**For general questions about statewide impacts, email:**

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**For general questions about statewide coordination, contact:**

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**For utility-specific questions, contact:**

<https://www.oregon.gov/OWRD/aboutus/contactus/Pages/RegionalOfficesandWatermastersDirectory.aspx>

**For questions about impacts to food and agriculture, contact:**

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