

# Imagine a day without water

By Patrick Lehman

If you wake up one morning and turn on the tap and water doesn't flow, what's next? You might still have morning coffee if you set it to automatically brew the night before or have bottled water in the house.

If you have kids, the house will start to stir with morning rituals: get up, go to the bathroom, brush teeth, maybe showers. It won't take long for the screaming to begin, "Mom, there's no water." "Dad, the toilet didn't flush."

You have piles of laundry, but the washing machine beeps that there is no water. It's alarming.

You call your utility because, let's face it, water is always there, except when it's not. The customer service line is busy. That's unusual. The number's in your phone now, so you get the kids dressed, trying to tamp down the whining. One is dropped at the bus stop, the other at school on the way to work.

At work, everyone is talking about it. Toilets don't flush, no water from the faucets or fountains, and most important no morning coffee!

People are annoyed, but not yet concerned.

As the toilets fail to refill with water and sit empty, people start getting angry. Restaurants,

schools, businesses, government offices, and shopping malls have to close as the lack of water makes it impossible to conduct business. It's becoming a public health and safety issue.

As soon as they realize there's a problem, hospitals and schools begin calling their utility, their elected representatives, the fire department. Unlike back-up power supplies one of our most essential services — water — doesn't have back up, not even fire services. Schools can call parents to come and get their kids, but hospitals? There's nowhere to put patients; they can't be sent home.

And it's not yet noon.

What would an entire day without water be like? Hurricane survivors know. People in Flint, Michigan know, and they are still receiving bottled water every day — now joined by the people of Newark, New Jersey. And, Fort Lauderdale recently had a day without water because of a construction accident that broke a water main serving the downtown area.

But residents of Charlotte, Desoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties don't have to worry about whether they will have water. For nearly 30 years, elected officials who sit on the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority board of directors have made a conscious

decision to plan and invest — to cooperatively develop water supplies for the region. It has been neither easy nor cheap, but they've always managed to work through any issues achieving what few communities can claim; water security.

With the latest water permit, the region has the water it needs for the next 50 years. Even so, they continue to invest, interconnecting their water supply systems so that in case of drought, hurricane or pipe break, water supplies can be rerouted through those connected systems, ensuring that people, businesses, hospitals, and schools have the water they need. Just ask the people in Charlotte County how important that was after Hurricane Charlie. As important, our member governments are delivering quality water — again, something you can count on.

As we count our blessings and take our water for granted, it's good to occasionally imagine what a day without water might be like. We can be grateful that we've had elected officials who looked forward and said, we will have water today and well into the future.

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