



WATER: OUR #1 PRIORITY

An Important Annual Update to the Community

Fire hydrant flushing: a vital water quality tool

Many citizens ask us why the City flushes its fire hydrants, seemingly wasting good water. Every day, the Athens water team collects samples from fire hydrants to evaluate water quality and ensure it meets state and federal water quality standards. To confirm the water is safe for public consumption, the sample needs to have a minimum level of chlorine for proper disinfection.

If the sample is approaching minimum standards, it's flushed from the system to bring in fresh, new water. This process is similar to using expiration dates on food products to guarantee freshness. By flushing the fire hydrants, Athens can provide high-quality water.

Flushing is most common in areas of lower usage, at the end of water lines and during the warmer months. During repairs and replacements of water lines, flushing is also required. As lines age, flushing becomes more frequent.

This annual report provides important information on our local drinking water quality. Beyond the 2016 water quality data, we're also providing timely information to let you know about the important water system improvements currently underway in Athens, which are the number one focus area for the city today.

As you may know, our water system is a joint effort between the City of Athens and the Athens Municipal Water Authority (AMWA). AMWA controls and protects the water in Lake Athens, our primary source of water, and owns the Water Treatment Plant. The City operates and maintains the treatment plant under a contract with AMWA and is responsible for supplying water to the community through a system of pipes and storage tanks.

We are focused on providing the best water and sewer system possible, and we are committed to providing Athens with a safe, reliable water supply that will serve our community for generations to come.

What's the latest on Athens' water system?

Athens water is **safe to drink** and our system is making tremendous improvements. In March 2017, the City was notified by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) that the water was in full compliance with state drinking water regulations, a strict standard that was met well ahead of the original target date for compliance.

Prior to the most recent testing, the City's running annual average had slightly exceeded the maximum level for a group of disinfection byproducts known as haloacetic acids (HAA5). It's important to note that **at no time** did the TCEQ recommend customers utilize a different water source for their drinking supply.

Quite simply, these byproducts are produced when chlorine, routinely added to water during the treatment process, reacts with naturally occurring organic matter in the water. To reduce the HAA5 levels, Athens' water treatment staff, under the leadership of the City Council and in partnership with AMWA, took an aggressive, layered approach and worked to strengthen the system to provide high-quality water for our residents far into the future.



Elevated storage tank, South Palestine

Meet the City's water team

Athens' Water Utility team, Collection and Distribution crews and Wastewater Utility crews work hard every day to ensure our citizens and businesses have a safe, reliable source of water. Every employee is licensed by the state and highly qualified at all levels. Athens' achievement of full compliance with TCEQ's state drinking water regulations is a testament to their capabilities and strong work.

The Water Utility team, led by Superintendent Mike Finney and a team of six water operators, focuses its efforts on 24/7/365 operations and maintenance of the City's Water Treatment Plant, wells and storage facilities. Additionally, they are dedicated to the planning and coordination of system improvements. Mike has over 16 years of water and wastewater operations experience and has earned the state's highest level water operator certification (A) as well as a C-level certification for wastewater operations.

Each water team member renews or upgrades their licenses with the TCEQ every three years, requiring hours of continuing education annually for a renewal, plus additional studies for upgrades. Additionally, our Collection and Distribution crews are out on-site every day, interacting with the public, repairing breaks, and keeping the water and wastewater systems flowing smoothly. The Collection and Distribution crews, as well as our Wastewater Utility team, are licensed by the state and held to similar standards of professionalism.

Thank you to our professional water staff for your continual hard work!

What near-term water system improvements are being made?

The City of Athens is currently tackling vital water infrastructure projects at a record rate to improve the future reliability of our water and wastewater system. This aggressive effort will see the completion of major projects within a three-year period.

We have already completed upgrades to the South Palestine Elevated Storage Tank and the Lane Street Ground Storage Tank. We have now started comprehensive rehabilitation and maintenance on the two Faulk Street water tanks, a project that should last throughout the summer. The refurbishment work includes adding new surface coating, replacing minor structural components, removing rust and cleaning the tanks' interiors to remove sediment build-up, which can impact storage capacity.

Later this year, when water demand is lower, we will fully replace the West Scott Street Ground Storage Tank, upgrading it to a concrete unit that should last up to 50 years. The City will then complete the final two rehabilitation projects – the Highway Loop 7 Elevated Storage Tank and Royal Mountain Standpipe – before the end of 2018.

Additionally, we are in the process of completing two studies to further advance our water system. The first study is designed to find potential upgrades to the Water Treatment Plant.

We are developing options for the treatment process to reduce organics and the amount of chlorine needed to reduce the likelihood of future HAA5 issues, including maximizing and potentially increasing the use of well water.

The designs and plans for the study are already underway, and the study is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The second study, the Water Model Study, is focused on helping us understand water system pressure issues and plan infrastructure needs for the next 20 years. This study is also expected to be completed by the end of this year and has been progressing smoothly. Both studies will help keep us on pace with technological advances and promote system-wide efficiency.

Altogether, these projects and studies demonstrate our commitment to providing quality water. We are investing in the future of our system and making major upgrades to address past issues and prevent any new occurrences.



Line maintenance work



Water tank rehab at Faulk Street

How does the City monitor and ensure our water quality?

The City checks the quality of our water every two hours, every day, and sends monthly reports to the state. Ensuring and maintaining water quality is our top priority. The water team conducts 24/7 monitoring, testing for chlorine levels and turbidity, which is the count of particles in the water and thus indicates the relative clarity of the water.

There is also consistent monitoring of filters and of water levels across the city to provide the optimal level of water pressure possible. The City of Athens regularly provides maintenance on its seven above- and below-ground water storage facilities as well. This ensures enhanced water quality, water pressure and overall system reliability.







North wastewater treatment plant



Rags and grease pulled from the system

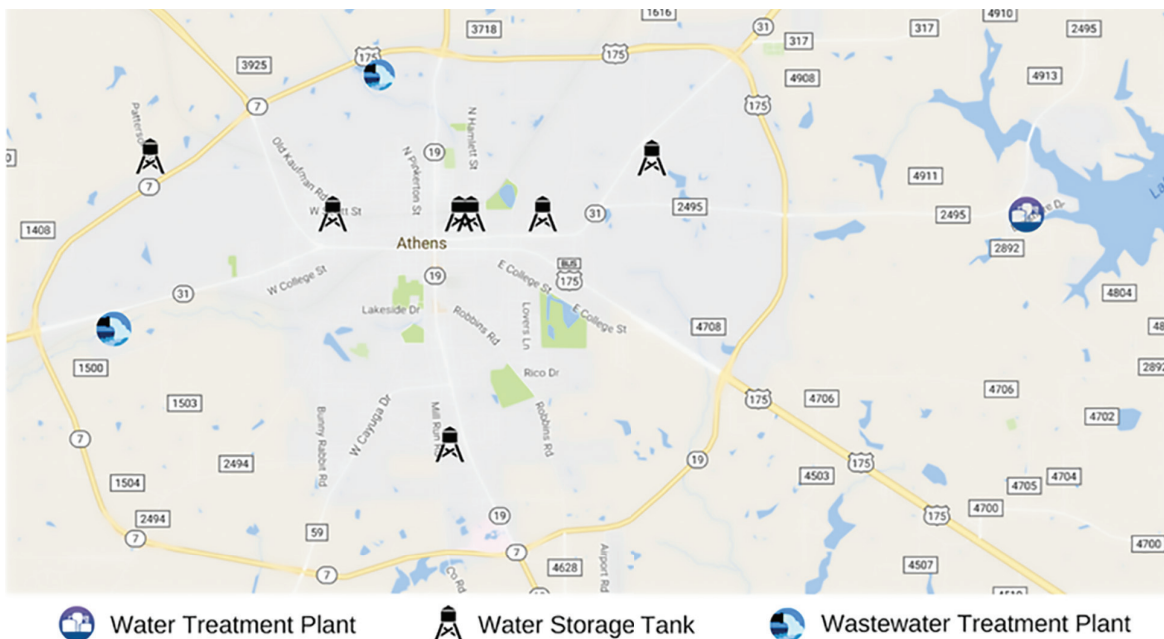
Protect your drains and our water system

Help protect your drains and our water system by adhering to the following guidelines:

-  **DON'T** flush wipes, paper towels, feminine hygiene products, clothing, fabrics and personal care items like dental floss or cotton balls; **DO** put them in the trash
-  **DON'T** flush fats, oils, and grease; **DO** allow them to cool and harden and then dispose of them in the trash*
-  **DON'T** flush cleaning product chemicals, paint and pesticide; **DO** take them to a hazardous waste collection facility
-  **DON'T** flush prescription medication; **DO** put it in the trash after mixing it with a substance such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds and placing it in a sealed plastic bag

**To coordinate the disposal of large quantities of fats, oils or grease, contact Republic Services at 903-677-1276 for special pick-up or drop-off instructions*

Athens Water System



Need to report a water or sewer line leak?

Please call City Hall at 903-675-5131. If calling after hours, the City Hall after hours menu service will provide you an option to connect you to an on-call water team member.



Have additional questions?

For any additional questions or to request a City staff member as a speaker, please contact the City of Athens Managing Director of Administrative Services Ryan Adams at 903-677-6642 or radams@athenstx.gov.

