

WATERWORKS

Provided for the neighbors and customers of Harris County WCID 132

**Harris County Water
Control and
Improvement
District No. 132**

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

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Proud Member of



District Completes Conversion to Surface Water

When the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District issued its mandate to reduce reliance on groundwater a little more than a decade ago -- to arrest subsidence and give the aquifers a chance to recharge -- the initial conversion to surface water milestone of 2010 seemed an eternity away. Today, our District has accomplished the necessary modifications to our water plant, and -- in compliance with the mandate -- we are delivering the required surface water through our system.

After years of planning, the North Harris County Regional Water Authority (NHCRWA) constructed more than 75 miles of new water delivery infrastructure and built two new regional pump plants to bring surface water to individual utility districts. This first phase of construction has been accomplished in an environmentally sensitive manner and completed on time and under budget. Now that the initial deadlines have been met, the Authority has begun planning the measures necessary to reach the 2020 conversion milestone -- reducing our reliance on groundwater to only 30 percent of our total water supply.

Our District has an excellent working relationship with the NHCRWA -- which was helpful in coordinating all the connection and supply details -- which resulted in a near seamless transition. While there were some isolated issues with water taste, odor and appearance, once the system adjusted to the new water "chemistry", these complaints leveled off and subsequently disappeared. We thank our customers for their support, cooperation and understanding as this milestone was achieved.

"The District has worked diligently to accomplish all the required conversion modifications," explained Tom Mancini, WCID 132 Board President. "We will continue to provide top quality water and sewer services to our customers in the same cost-effective manner as we have traditionally done. We want to stress, however," he continued, "that the days of cheap and plentiful water are over, and we all have to learn to use water more efficiently in order to sustain this precious natural resource for the generations ahead." ♦

The water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow.

Meet a Board Member...

Mary Bonetati

One of WCID 132's newest Directors is also one of Cypresswood subdivision's most long term residents. Mary Bonetati has lived in the same house since May of 1973. At that time, Cypresswood Drive did not go past the new Clubhouse and there were few homes and lots of woods. Her own family grew up as the community did, and today Mary's children have added to her joy with the addition of five wonderful grandchildren.

While her family and the community were expanding, Mary taught school. She began her 36 years with Klein I.S.D. at Klein High School, teaching 9th grade Physical Science. Four years later, Strack Intermediate opened and she moved over there as Department Chairman and 7th grade science teacher.

She was again called to a new school when Klein Oak High School opened in 1982, and she not only served as Science Department Chairman, but taught Anatomy, Physiology, and Regular plus AP Biology until 2002. During those years, Mary taught just about every teenager from Cypresswood subdivision!

It wasn't long before Klein ISD had even bigger plans for Mary, and she was honored to be named their Science Instructional Officer for Kindergarten through 12th grade—a very big job with Klein's increasing enrollment. Mary also has taught Alternative Certification Programs for the Harris County Department of Education, and workshops at Sam Houston State University and Ball State University in Indiana.

Willowbrook Rotary Club named Mary their "**1996 Outstanding Teacher**". She was also awarded a Summer Teacher Internship at the Museum of Health and Medical Science in 1999, and was recognized as Klein ISD's "**2002 Secondary Teacher of the Year**".

Mary is known by her peers for her dedication and her considerable teaching and student motivational skills. Mary's 38 years as an educator stand her in good stead as she once again serves her community as a member of the Board of Directors of WCID 132. 💧



No one wakes up and says,
"I'm going to waste some water today!"

Yet thousands of gallons of this finite resource are wasted every day through dripping faucets, "running" toilets, unnecessary lawn irrigation, and just plain carelessness. Let's face it...we've taken our water supplies for granted. Please help conserve our groundwater resources to enable our aquifers to recharge.

Let's put water-wasting habits to bed!

Harvesting the Rain - Right from Your Roof

Collecting rainwater for your garden is a smart idea; plants like rainwater, because it's naturally soft, and free of chemicals. If the area is hit with another drought, collecting rainwater is a good way to deal with watering restrictions. You may also find that having a rain barrel is a handy alternative to the garden hose when it comes to watering container plants -- in hanging baskets or pots.

It's surprising how much water can be collected every time it rains. Just a half inch of rain falling on a 1,000-square-foot roof will yield 300 gallons of water! To get a quick idea how much water the roof of your own house might yield, here's an example. For a modest-sized house, say 30 x 36 ft., with a typical 2 ft. roof overhang, a half inch of rain would yield about 408 gallons of water. That's enough to fill six standard-size rain barrels.

Try it yourself!

It used to be a lot more difficult to find good quality rain barrels, and that meant relying on internet 'shops' with pricey shipping costs. Today, however, just about every garden and home improvement store has a selection of the handy containers at reasonable prices.



This rain barrel stays full year 'round with runoff from a small garden shed's roof.

Here's what you need to set up your own rain harvesting system:

1. Gutters and a Downspout. If you don't already have rain gutters on your house, this one-time investment will likely be the biggest related cost. High

quality gutters can be rather expensive, but even the least-expensive gutter system will suffice.

2. Rain Barrel. Select a rainwater container. They are usually made of heavy duty plastic and they come in several colors (e.g., dark green, gray or terra cotta) and can hold various amounts of water. If you want to start small and keep it simple, consider a rain barrel with a water capacity of 40 to 80 gallons of water. If you have the space, several barrels can be set up in tandem. Prices vary, but most quality barrels are about \$100-\$150 each.



A downspout diverter is a popular British device that has been adapted to fit American downspouts.

3. Debris Screen and Lid. A "downspout diverter" makes it easy to direct rainwater right into the storage tank. (Check local home improvement stores or the internet for these.) But before the water goes into the rain barrel, it is important to use some kind of debris screen to filter out leaves, pine needles and other debris. If the debris isn't filtered out, it will accumulate at the bottom of the tank and may clog up the outflow. A removable wire mesh screen is all that is really needed, either mounted on top of the rain barrel or attached to the end of the downspout. A well-fitting lid is also important for safety (to keep pets and children out), and to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in the water.

4. Distribution Device. For a rain barrel, all that's needed is a standard spigot or short length of hose installed near the bottom of the barrel, with an on/off valve. Then let gravity do the work. A longer hose can be attached to reach your garden, or just use the rain barrel's spigot to fill watering cans.

If your primary motivation is to collect rainwater for your garden, you don't need to worry about capturing every inch of rain that falls on your roof. But consider this: If you get about 10-inches of rain over the course of the spring and summer, an average, 1,360-square-foot roof would yield 8,160 gallons of rain water. You have to admit that whether you're in a drought situation or not, it's hard to pass up that much of a free thing! 💧

Working at the Car Wash... Yeah!*

Remember all those Saturday mornings when newly licensed, teen drivers all over America were allowed to pull the family car out to the driveway and give it a carwash? Little sisters and brothers got to scrub the wheels, while the teens got the privilege of polishing the chrome—wow!

For hours on end, rivers of water, soap and oily scum flowed down driveways into streets, storm drains and ultimately into our rivers and streams. Who knew that was a problem back then?

But, like many other milestone moments from the past, the whole process of car washing has also evolved. This had to happen for two simple reasons: one, we have to pay a lot more attention to how we use a precious resource like water, and two, we cannot add to the pollution from nonpoint sources in the rivers, streams and lakes that eventually become our water supply.

Huge Water Users...

A 5/8 inch hose, running at 50 lbs. per square inch (PSI), uses about 12 gallons of water each minute...that's about 120 gallons in just ten minutes of washing -- and you haven't even finished the wheels! More likely it will take double, or triple, that amount of time to get the car sparkling.

Houston has over 2.5 million people. If half of them have a car to wash (and we ALL have cars here) that is 1.25 million cars. If we do it ourselves and use 20 minutes to do it, that's 140 gallons of water each. Collectively, we would use 17.5 million gallons of water for this one giant carwash!

Luckily, we now have several alternatives to this old fashioned approach to car washing. The first

is to drive to our neighborhood carwash and let the professionals do the job. Most car washes now recycle their water and have far more efficient methods of washing than we can do at home.

A second choice is to find a do-it-yourself facility that also uses much less water and contains the runoff. These speedy facilities are affordable and readily available.

If you absolutely LOVE the fun of washing and polishing your own beloved set of wheels, at least control your water usage by turning the hose off and on only as you need it, and pull your car onto the lawn or any other permeable surface to help filter out the pollutants from the runoff.

Now, let's evaluate the



ever-popular **charity car wash!**

On any given weekend, once the weather starts to warm up, kids will be seen jumping up and down with "CAR WASH" signs on many a street corner. The youngsters are hard to resist supporting, but, unfortunately, these events waste thousands of gallons of water and send pollutants into the storm drains, too.



Here are some suggestions that will help the kids raise their funds, but also give them a positive lesson in using water more efficiently:

1. Hold the event at a commercial car wash. Most local businesses look for ways to support local groups. The kids can still jump up and down with signs to get cars to come in, but the business can give back a percentage of the sales.
2. Conduct the carwash on a permeable surface. Ball fields or gravel areas can significantly minimize the runoff and pollution from the event.
3. If none of the above is possible, you can still have a better result from washing only the exterior of the car for less grimy runoff. Also, do not let hoses run nonstop, but turn them on and off only as water is needed. Use only non-toxic, biodegradable, phosphate-free cleaners. Do not use de-greasing products, solvents or tire cleaner products.

Compare A Professional Car Wash...

- ◆ Average **flow rate** wash and rinse: 3GPM (gallons per minute)
- ◆ Average **time** for washing and rinsing vehicle: 2.6 minutes
- ◆ Average **water used** for wash and rinse: 7.9 gallons
- ◆ Average water used for 20 minute home car wash: 140 gallons!

Be careful about what you throw away... Greasy food scraps can come back to haunt you!



For a lot of families, the kitchen just seems to be the favorite place to gather.. especially when tempting aromas beckon and there are lots of tasty tidbits to sample. When the scrumptious meals are over, however, everything from breakfast scraps to the more bulky “feast” leftovers get scraped into the disposal in the kitchen sink. It is not quite so appetizing to think of all those shredded greasy food scraps sliding down the drain where, once they begin to accumulate in the pipes, they can cause some serious blockage.

Some foods and cooking ingredients are potentially more troublesome than others. Discarded substances like cooking oil, bacon grease, mayonnaise, poultry skin, and pasta can stagnate in underground plumbing lines and get even messier when joined by dinner roll scraps, gravy and mashed potatoes. Then sometime later, when the meal is long forgotten, the sewer system becomes blocked sufficiently to cause a backup inside the house and the plumber reaps the benefits of costly remedies and repairs.

While most homeowners may not be aware that commercial establishments and restaurants are required to install “grease traps” or interceptors and have them cleaned regularly, there are no such requirements for private homes. It is up to the homeowner to make sure that their pipes aren’t clogged up with discarded food.

According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), most sewer backups occur between the house and the main sewer lines. This means that it is the resident’s responsibility to correct the problem. In even more complicated situations, grease blockages in the main lines can cause chain events --sanitary sewer overflows lead to pollution of nearby lakes and streams which create potential health threats for people and wildlife.

Disposal of cooking grease into storm drains has the potential to cause more havoc. The storm drains lead directly to streams and creeks, so *discarded grease can also pollute the nearest water source*. Remember, any substance poured onto the ground can end up in groundwater. Take the time to dispose of greasy substances properly...recycle as much as possible and pour cooking oils, lards, and grease into closeable containers for disposal. Or consider mixing with dry kitty litter until the oil is absorbed and then place in a zipped-top bag for disposal.



Here are some additional tips for the disposal of grease and leftovers from TCEQ...

- Place grease and used cooking oils in covered collection containers. Let them solidify on the counter or in the refrigerator before placing them in the garbage.
- Scrape food scraps into trash cans or garbage bags; minimize the use of the disposal. Non-meat and dairy food items may be placed in a compost pile.
- Remove oil or grease from dishes, pans and griddles by using a rubber spatula or paper towel to absorb it instead of rinsing it down the sink.
- Prewash greasy dishes and pans with cold water -- not hot -- before going into the dishwasher.
- Do NOT pour cooking oil and grease down the drain...ever.
- Overall, be careful what you scrape into the disposal. Once the walls of the pipes begin to clog up, all kinds of discarded scraps can exacerbate the problem.
- Don’t run hot water over dishes, pans, fryers or griddles to wash oil and grease down the drain. ♦





WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- **Maintain an emergency kit at home;** refresh supplies regularly. Make sure each family member knows where these supplies are kept.
- **Develop a family emergency plan** (See also fire safety article, page 8) -- Select a location to meet if family members are separated and become unable to contact each other. Also select a person out of the area for all members to call/contact with information.
- **Pay attention and observe pre- and post-emergency safety advisories,** such as evacuation or water quality notices. Watch for emergency information signs within the neighborhoods.

NOTE: Extended power outages might also result in lower water pressure. If this occurs, **YOU WILL BE ASKED TO CONSERVE WATER,** and to avoid using irrigation systems until the emergency is over.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Water Supplier: Harris County WC ID #132
www.wcid312.com

Operator: Environmental Development Partners, L.L.C.

24/7 Contact: 832-467-1599

Hurricane Essentials:

- Portable, battery-powered radio
- Small generator that can be used to power appliances/TV/computers and fuel to last until more can be obtained
- Flashlight and batteries
- First-aid kit with a manual
- Bottled water and assorted beverages
- Nonperishable foods, pull-top canned foods, packaged snacks
- Manual can opener
- Credit cards and cash
- Personal ID, maps, and emergency phone numbers and prescriptions
- Paper plates, paper towels, disposable cups
- Baby needs: Disposable diapers and formula.
- Matches, masking tape
- Pet supplies, any medications or care items.

Experiencing Hurricane Ike -- and watching the devastation of Katrina in New Orleans -- taught us some valuable lessons, and reminded us that communication is critical to everything we do! Extended power outages not only left people in the dark in their homes, but also disabled electronic communications -- cell and land-lines, internet access, radio and TV -- which made it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain timely information about the storm recovery efforts. Another hurricane season is almost upon us (June through November). Perhaps with the memory of recent hurricanes still vivid in our minds, folks will pay a little more attention to advice about emergency planning.

The Board of WCID #132 has adopted some aggressive measures to help our customers be more prepared for -- and better able to respond to -- emergencies and natural disasters such as extreme storms. The District's Emergency Response Plan is focused on sustaining water and sewer services through the duration of such emergencies AND to provide access to important information, as well.

The Emergency Response Plan provides:

1. Emergency generators at plant facilities designed to run the water system for an extended period of time, and a source of fuel to run them.
2. Trained operating company personnel to be in the District -- as soon as it is safe after the storm clears the area if evacuations were required -- to check on all equipment/facilities.
3. Consistent locations for emergency communications throughout the subdivision as well as the District's website.

What is SUSTAINABILITY... and what does it mean to you?



Sometimes new words come into our vocabulary...or old words take on a new meaning -- which is the case with SUSTAINABILITY. The dictionary says that the root word, *sustain*, means to last or endure. That's simple enough. So, sustainability, then is the ability to continue or survive.

Today, the word is increasingly used to refer to what will be required for planet Earth to *sustain* all of its resources to be able to provide a home for humans and animals and plants...forever. A lot of changes have occurred over the past 100 years that have impacted our environment -- natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and floods; man-made and natural air and water pollution; and depletion of some of our natural resources like groundwater. People are searching for sustainable solutions to problems, which means finding solutions that work well now and into the future for the long-term.

One of the important things to think about is where the products and services that you buy or use come from. Where do the "leftovers" from these items go? What impact does your use of these products or services have on our overall environment? On other humans and animals and plants? Can these products be recycled or reused? And, do you take the time to make recycling a habit?

When you think about these important issues, consider the resources that are used to manufacture things that you use. Are these resources *renewable* or *non-renewable*? Renewable resources are those that can be restored or regenerated naturally as fast or faster than they are used.

Many business leaders have decided that sustainability matters very much, and they have chosen not to use so much extra packaging on their products that just ends up in landfills. The production of energy uses both renewable and non-renewable resources, and *what goes around comes around*, so to speak. We used to rely on windmills to bring water up to the surface for use by settlers and animals during the frontier days. Today, giant turbines are catching the wind to produce millions of kilowatt hours of electricity.

And just about everywhere on our planet, people are realizing that our precious water resources are not being replaced as fast as we are using them, and that we need to balance meeting the water needs of current and future users while protecting and sustaining the natural systems that provide it.

There is something people of all ages can do to help and that is to change wasteful habits and behaviors when it comes to water use. Remember, the water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow! ■



HC WCID 132

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What do you know about FIRE... and how to survive one?

Every day in America, families experience the horror of a residential fire. Unfortunately, far too many people don't understand this dangerous element, and therefore are ill prepared to protect themselves, family members or pets. Here are some essential facts about the particular characteristics of FIRE to help you get out alive!

■ **FIRE IS FAST!** There is little time in which to make decisions. In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a house. In minutes a house can be engulfed in flames.



Most fires occur in the home when people are asleep. If you wake up to a fire, don't try to grab valuables... there is only time to escape!

■ **FIRE IS HOT!** Heat is more threatening than flames. A fire's heat alone can kill. Room temperatures in a fire can be 100 degrees at floor level and rise to 600 degrees at eye level. Inhaling this super hot air will scorch your lungs. In just five minutes a room can get so hot that everything in it ignites at once...this is called flashover.

■ **FIRE IS DARK!** Fire isn't bright, it's pitch black. The ignition may be bright, but fire quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness. If you wake up to a fire you may be disoriented and unable to find your way around the home you've lived in for years.

■ **FIRE IS DEADLY!** Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Fire uses up the oxygen you need and produces smoke and poisonous gases. Breathing even small amounts of smoke and toxic gases can make you drowsy, disoriented and short of breath. The orderless, colorless gas fumes can lull you into a deep sleep before the flames reach your door.

■ **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SURVIVE A FIRE...**in the event of a fire, **remember time is the biggest enemy and every second counts.** Escape first, then call for help. Develop a home fire escape plan and designate a meeting place outside. Make sure everyone in the family knows two ways to escape from every room. Practice feeling your way out with your eyes closed. Never stand up in a fire...always crawl low under the smoke and try to keep your mouth covered. NEVER return to a burning building for ANY reason...it may cost you your life. **Having working smoke alarms throughout the house dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire.** Practice your home escape plan frequently with the whole family...and take it seriously. A home fire **can** happen to you. Plan ahead to get out alive! ■

