

Unit 3: Power



St. Joseph's New Water System Goes Online

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For the first time in years, St. Joseph's water is safe to drink.

On Tuesday, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards unveiled the town's new \$9 million water distribution system, paid for by the state's Capital Outlay Program and the Delta Regional Authority.

"This is a big day for this community," Edwards said.

A big day after 18 months worth of work. In December 2016, Edwards called a public health emergency when the Louisiana Department of Health found lead in the old system. The National Guard and volunteers spent months passing out bottled water.

St. Joseph's Mayor Elvadás Fields says all the hard work has finally paid off.

"(This is) one of the best days of my life, and certainly one of the best days for us here in St. Joseph," said Fields.

But, not everybody is celebrating just yet.

"I'd say bittersweet," said Ruby Shorts, a St. Joseph resident. "It's not a good day. It's not a bad day. It's an in-between day."

Some people like Shorts are still having problems in their homes. Her washing machine still fills up with discolored water. Her bedroom carpet is ripped up after she says the new system's high water pressure broke a pipe in her bathroom.

"I put my feet down on the carpet, and my feet went straight down in the water, she said. "I was wondering what happened."

And Shorts isn't alone, DHH says there are still some homes that show high lead levels.

"There's only about six that are remaining that have a little lead that's above the level," State Health Officer Jimmy Guidry said. "But, all the others are below the acceptable level. And we will continue to work with those that have slightly elevated [levels], and that should get better with all this treatment."

It could take a while before the whole town is lead-free. But, in the meantime, many people are finally starting to trust the faucet again.

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"It's a game changer, our water is clean. Like, we can drink out of the faucet. It's different," Tensas Parish High School student Justin Leonard said.

Works Cited

Picht, N. (2018, March 13). St. Joseph's new water system goes online. Retrieved from KNOE:
<https://www.knoe.com/content/news/St-Joseph-water-system-goes-online-476746333.html>