



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: David Armstrong, General Manager, South Mesa Water Company
909 795-2401

South Mesa Takes Measures to Protect Well #5 from Impacts of Yucaipa Valley Water's Sewage Rupture During Sandalwood Fire

October 22, 2019, Calimesa, California -- South Mesa Water Company President George Jorritsma notified South Mesa customers and county health officials, of actions the company is taking to safeguard water supplies after a Yucaipa Valley Water District sewage lift station ruptured and flowed in the vicinity of South Mesa's Well #5 during the Sandalwood Fire in Calimesa on October 11th. "We want to inform you that Well #5 has been off since the fire, and will remain off until Southern California Edison returns power to the area. We will not know if Yucaipa Valley Water District's sewage rupture affected the well, or, the extent of any impact until power is restored," said Jorritsma.

Jorritsma continued, "In the meantime, South Mesa is grateful for the assistance from the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health Hazardous Materials Management Branch (HHMMB). On Saturday, October 18th, we received instructions from HHMMB for special access permissions and procedures for handling Well #5 and the ground it rests upon. The communication notified South Mesa that "Health & Safety Warning's (are) in place for anyone going onto the property due to the hazardous waste and suspected asbestos on the property." The source of asbestos is from the fire that overtook a nearby trailer park, that may have mixed with the sewage overspilled from Yucaipa Valley Water District's wastewater lift station that flowed in the vicinity of Well #5."

"South Mesa is grateful for offers of funding assistance from the State's Office of Emergency Response that we were invited to apply for, to offset the costs that would otherwise fall upon our shareholders. This support would allow us to take thorough steps in the abundance of caution to protect our water supplies," Jorritsma said.

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Notwithstanding these issues, I am glad to report that we have been able to keep our reservoir levels above 90% of capacity, ensuring service and emergency preparedness. We will make every effort to keep you informed, and want to assure you of our efforts to protect our safe and affordable water supplies even when faced with the challenges of fires and Yucaipa Valley's sewage rupture in Calimesa"

The South Mesa Water Company is a not-for-profit mutual water company owned by the area's homeowners and founded in 1912. South Mesa serves portions of the City of Calimesa in Riverside County, and portions of the City of Yucaipa in San Bernardino County. South Mesa meets demands by carefully managing local groundwater resources. This helps to drastically limit dependence on Northern California supplies.

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