Safe Drinking Water Act: Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and Town of Bell Buckle Enter into Agreed Final Order



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

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The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation ("TDEC") and Town of Bell Buckle, Tennessee entered into an October 17th Agreed Final Order ("AFO") addressing alleged violations of certain rules addressing public water systems. See Case No. DWS24-0111.

Bell Buckle is stated to own, operate, and/or control a community public water system in Bedford County, Tennessee.

Bell Buckle is stated to obtain its water from the City of Wartrace, which in turn gets its water from the City of Tullahoma. Tullahoma is stated to receive its water from the Duck River Utility Commission which withdraws from the Duck River. The System serves 895 connections and a population of approximately 2,633.

TDEC Division of Water Resources ("Division") performed a sanitary survey of the system on August 13, 2020. A sanitary survey letter was issued which identified the following violations:

- Two construction projects were completed; however, there were no records describing disinfection practices, flushing or sampling for the projects.
- Three backflow devices were not tested in 2019.

A sanitary survey of the system was undertaken on July 14, 2022, and the following violations were identified:

- The Cascade Tank roof vent screen and overflow screen were of improper size according to the tank inspection reports.
- The construction project 21-0125, Hannah Street Water Line Replacement, was completed, however, there were no records describing disinfection practices, flushing or sampling for the project. The lack of proper documentation on new lines was a redundant issue that was also identified in the 2020 sanitary survey.
- The Cascade and Covered Bridge Tanks were inspected by remotely operated vehicle (ROV) on September 25, 2020. No documentation of disinfection procedures was available for the ROV, and no bacteriological samples were collected from the tanks following the inspection.
- At the time of the survey, 14 backflow devices were not tested in 2021. Eight devices that had a test status of failed in 2021 were not retested in 2021. Several of these devices were tested in 2022 and failed again. No follow-up had been conducted at the time of the survey.

Division personnel are stated to have performed a file review and determined that Bell Buckle failed to timely perform a Level 1 Assessment under the Revised Total Coliform Rule after the total coliform positive samples exceeded the 5 percent level on April 21, 2023, during the monthly monitoring period of April 2023. Bell Buckle completed the assessment but was 18 days late.

A sanitary survey was undertaken on July 10, 2024, and the following violations were identified:

- The system incurred a treatment technique violation of the Revised Total Coliform Rule for failure to conduct a Level 1 Assessment within 30 days of exceeding the trigger as required by Rule 0400-45-01-.41(9)(b)3. The system was notified by an advisement letter dated June 17, 2023.
- Numerous tank maintenance issues were noted: Covered Bridge Tank had a leak.
- Covered Bridge Tank had debris packed around the flapper on the overflow.
- The fence at Covered Bridge Tank needed repair; overhanging tree limbs needed to be trimmed; vines and brush removed. Small trees around the Covered Bridge Tank needed to be removed.
- The exterior paint at the Cascade Tank is severely chalked. Painting is needed.

A civil penalty of $15,435.00 is assessed. Further, the AFO provides for certain penalties if required work (i.e., corrective action) is not undertaken in a timely manner as specified in the document.

A copy of the AFO can be downloaded here.