

STATE OF COLORADO

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Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

D 006 08

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Declaring a Disaster Emergency Due to the Contamination of the Public Water Supply in Alamosa County

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to relevant portions of the Colorado Disaster Emergency Act of 1992, C.R.S. § 24-32-2100, *et seq.*, I, Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order declaring a state of disaster emergency due to the contamination of the public water supply in Alamosa County, Colorado.

I. Background and Purpose

On March 19, 2008, a public health emergency occurred in Alamosa County, Colorado, when contamination of the public water supply was identified as the likely cause of widespread illness in the community. This event has placed an extraordinary burden on various state and local governments and non-profit agencies within the state. The first case of salmonella related to this event was reported to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) on March 14, 2008. Currently, there are at least 138 cases of salmonella in the Alamosa community, believed to be associated with the city's drinking water system. More than fifty percent of these cases are children under the age of 18; however, all age groups are impacted.

Water samples collected from the city of Alamosa's public drinking water system indicate the presence of bacterial contamination, although sample results for the presence of salmonella are still pending. On March 19, 2008, CDPHE issued a Bottled Water Order for the city of Alamosa, advising area residents and visitors to immediately stop using tap water from the city's drinking water system and to begin using bottled water until further notice. That same evening, the City of Alamosa and County of Alamosa jointly declared an emergency.

Significant effort is underway to provide the community with additional water supplies and to flush and disinfect the entire public water system. The widespread nature of the public health emergency is overwhelming available emergency and medical resources and disrupting public and private infrastructure and services. Such impacts will require extraordinary measures to contain the spread of the disease, treat the victims, protect the public health, ensure public safety, render relief, protect the public from further impact, restore vital services and protect the Colorado economy. At this time, control of the outbreak has not occurred and the community needs additional resources to contain the

event and provide necessary services to the community of Alamosa. The city of Alamosa serves as the economic hub for the entire San Luis Valley, and in addition to having an adverse impact on individuals, this outbreak has significantly affected local businesses such as retail food establishments, grocers, and health care providers. These current conditions constitute a threat to the safety and welfare of the State, and create a disaster emergency within the scope of the Disaster Emergency Act, C.R.S. § 24-32-2104(2).

II. Declaration and Directives

- A. I hereby declare that the contamination of the public water supply in Alamosa County constitutes a disaster emergency for purposes of C.R.S. § 24-32-2103.
- B. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-32-2104(5), the State Emergency Operations Plan ("Plan") is hereby activated. All State departments and agencies shall take whatever actions may be required and requested by the Colorado Division of Emergency Management, within the Plan, to respond to the disaster emergency, including provision of appropriate staff as necessary.
- C. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-32-2104(6) and § 28-3-104, as commander-in-chief of military forces, I hereby employ and call to active duty certain elements of the Colorado National Guard as may be necessary to respond to this disaster, and delegate command authority to the Director of the Colorado Division of Emergency Management and the Adjutant General of the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.
- D. I order the encumbrance of up to \$300,000 from the Disaster Emergency Fund to pay for the response effort related to this disaster. These funds shall be used to assist with providing and distributing water to those impacted by the disaster. The Director of the Colorado Division of Emergency Management is hereby authorized and directed to allocate the funding to the appropriate state agencies. These funds shall remain available for this purpose for six months from the date of this Executive Order.
- E. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-32-2104(7), I hereby authorize the Colorado Department of Transportation, at its discretion, to waive any fees or other restrictions that may impede the rapid delivery of emergency water supplies to the Alamosa Community.
- F. The Director of the Colorado Division of Emergency Management is hereby authorized and directed to coordinate application for any low-interest loans or other federal funding related to this disaster emergency that may be available to assist residents with recovering from the disaster,

including but not limited to Small Business Administration loans, Community Development Block Grants, and Community Service Block Grants.

- G. All verbal orders that I issued regarding this disaster emergency, including my disaster emergency declaration on this date, are hereby memorialized by this Executive Order and shall have the full force and effect of law as if they were contained within this Executive Order.

III. Duration

This Executive Order shall expire thirty days from its date of signature unless extended by future Executive Order.



GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado this twenty-first day of March, 2008.

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor