

# Waukesha Water Utility: Waukesha's largest well is shut down for repairs

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WAUKESHA, WI. (March 29, 2022) — Waukesha's largest well, Well 10, is shut down due to a March 14 pump failure, according to the Waukesha Water Utility (WWU). Contractors have been on site assessing the situation and planning repairs.

"We have a temporary backup pump and motor on site, but our contractors must attempt to recover the old equipment first," WWU General Manager Dan Duchniak said. "We confirmed last week with cameras that the pump and motor, along with 230 feet of column pipe, have fallen to the bottom of this 2,200-foot well. The parts we need to remove weigh more than 11 tons. That work started today."

Duchniak said the timeline for the installing the backup pump and motor is still being determined. Once the temporary pump is installed it will operate at half capacity until a permanent repair is completed. He said repair costs are currently unknown, although he expects an insurance claim to be filed due to the breaking of the support pipe that holds the pump equipment in the well.

Well 10 provides 3.8 million gallons of radium compliant water per day. Waukesha averages about 6 million gallons per day of water use, but demand fluctuates with the seasons. Waukesha's 9 other operating wells will be used to cover the needs while Well 10 is under repair.

"This is not the first time the Well 10 pump has failed. In fact, we were averaging one failure per year among all our wells from several years," Duchniak said. "The last time Well 10 failed was two and a half years ago. It pumps water from very deep – more than 600 feet below the surface. Although we have one of the largest submersible pumps in the world, there is additional strain on all of our equipment when pumping water from an aquifer that is severely depleted."

Duchniak said the continuing problems help demonstrate the need to switch from the deep aquifer to Lake Michigan water. “There are two reasons we are switching a Great Lakes water. One is that our deep aquifer is drawn down so far; it is not sustainable or reliable for the long term. The other is that our groundwater is contaminated with naturally occurring contaminants like radium. All ten Great Lakes states and provinces agreed, under the Great Lakes Compact, that our only reasonable water supply option is to switch to Lake Michigan water.”

The good news for water customers is that the infrastructure for the Lake Michigan water supply is more than 50% complete. “We are on time and on budget to switch to Great Lakes water by September 2023,” he said. “The challenges of keeping our deep aquifer wells running are continuing, but I am confident in the ability of our staff to meet the city’s needs.”

The Great Water Alliance was formed to help inform the public about the switch to a new water supply. To learn more, visit [www.greatwateralliance.com](http://www.greatwateralliance.com)