

Jackson, Mississippi: Water pressure returns, but safety issues linger

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After a week, water pressure has been restored in Jackson, Mississippi, the state's capital and largest city, allowing some 150,000 residents to flush their toilets and get water from their faucets. Some residents have reported that the water which is flowing through their faucets is severely tainted, making it unsafe to consume.

City officials reported "significant gains" were made late Friday night going into Saturday with the O.B. Curtis Water Treatment Plant increasing plant output to 86 pounds per square inch (PSI), close to their goal of 87 PSI. On Sunday water pressure reached 90 PSI. "All tanks maintained storage levels overnight. We currently do not have any tanks at low levels. All of Jackson should now have pressure, and most are now experiencing normal pressure," the city's new release declared Monday.

During a Monday news conference, Mississippi Republican Governor Tate Reeves said, "Today, the tanks are full. Water pressure is solid," noting, "there may be more bad days in the future; we have, however, reached a place where people in Jackson can trust that water will come out of the faucet. People in Jackson can trust the toilets can be flushed."

The explicit warning of "more bad days" is a backhanded guarantee that there will be no overhaul of the city's water infrastructure to ensure every resident's basic social right to clean water. The next extreme weather event, all but guaranteed due to the effects of climate change, could once again knock out this essential service.

On Monday, Jackson Public Schools announced in-person classes will resume Tuesday thanks to resumption of water service, this despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed more than 1 million lives in the United States alone. "Rest assured,

we will make every possible effort to keep our schools open for in-person learning," a Jackson Public Schools' Twitter declared.

Notwithstanding water pressure having been returned to the city, Jackson residents remain under a boil-water advisory. In order for the advisory to be lifted, officials must receive two rounds of clear samples from the water. This is expected to occur, according to city officials, this week.

Since July 30, the city has been under a boil-water notice due to high "level[s] of manganese combined with the use of lime" from damaged main pumps at the O.B. Curtis Water Treatment Plant, according to city officials. Late last month, torrential rains brought significant flooding to the Pearl River which placed immense strain on the O.B. Curtis plant, causing it to fail.

On Sunday, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Deanne Criswell said it was far too early to determine whether Jackson residents will have access to safe drinking water. "The focus right now is making sure we can get bottled water out," Criswell noted.

Also on Sunday, Jackson's Democratic Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba warned of "additional challenges" pertaining to repairs being made as water pressure is restored, such as the bursting of fragile, decades-old pipes. In speaking with ABC's "This Week," Lumumba said, "As I have always warned, even when the pressure is restored, even when we're not under a boil-water notice, it's not a matter of if these systems will fail, but when these systems will fail." He continued, "There are many points of failure. We're talking about a set of accumulated challenges that have taken place over the better part of 30 years."

Over that same period, Democratic and Republican administrations have poured trillions of dollars into

war, coups and regional destabilization from the first Gulf War to the bombing of Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Libya to name but a few examples. Now the Biden administration is spending tens of billions on the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. All the while society's infrastructure, which the population relies on, has been allowed to decay and collapse.

President Joe Biden and the Democrats, who posture as the saviors of "disadvantaged communities," particularly those "of color," have made no effort to overhaul the majority African American city, let alone the nation's crumbling infrastructure. The \$2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act nationally will prove insufficient for needed repairs and replacements in every state, while funneling money into the coffers of big corporations. Meanwhile, the stock market will remain safe thanks to Federal Reserve and government bailouts.

Without any serious opposition from the Biden administration, Mississippi's Republican-controlled state legislature has sat on federal funds from the COVID-19 pandemic stimulus instead of distributing it to those in need. "The federal government is going to have to figure out ways to bypass these Republican-controlled governors and legislatures to get money in the hands of the cities which are going to be the Democratic Party stronghold," said Kali Akuno, co-director of Cooperation Jackson, a local activist organization which operates in the orbit of the Democratic Party.

"Mississippi typifies that in a lot of ways," said Akuno, continuing, "But I think we're kind of a canary in the coal mine for what's coming down the road for a lot of municipalities facing similar infrastructure issues."

Mississippi Republican Senator Roger Wicker, one of 19 Republicans to join Senate Democrats in passing the 2021 \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law, told CNN the O.B. Curtis Water Treatment facility deteriorated, in part, because "there have been tax base problems with population decline" in Jackson. Mayor Lumumba has alluded to raising the sales tax on Jackson residents, a quarter of whom live below the federal poverty line, which will be needed to resolve the city's funding issues.

Lumumba told ABC "safe, drinkable, reliable,

sustainable and equitable" will be a long and arduous task to secure. In promoting himself as a political innovator that can make gains for the working class, he said, "I've been lifting up this circumstance amongst many individuals that are in leadership and have influence over a solution," further stating, "I don't want to put it squarely in one person's lap, but I think there's a well-defined record of me lifting that up."

On Monday, Governor Reeves spoke truly of the state of the water system. "This system broke over several years, and it would be inaccurate to claim it is totally solved in a matter of less than a week." However, in this truth, Reeves has expressed an indifference to the lives of those who live in Jackson and throughout the state, as he bears responsibility for stalling necessary funds for COVID-19 relief and overhauling water sewage infrastructure in the city.



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