



For Immediate Release:

April 22, 2026

HMU Provides Update on Reverse Osmosis System Incident

Harlan Municipal Utilities (HMU) is providing an update regarding a recent operational issue involving its reverse osmosis (RO) water treatment system. The situation has been resolved, and water quality remains safe.

On Friday, April 17, a 100-horsepower motor on RO Unit #2 failed, prompting operators to initiate an emergency shutdown to protect the system from further damage. On Monday, April 20, operators installed a spare 100-horsepower motor and conducted pre-startup checks, placing RO Unit #2 on standby service.

Early Tuesday morning, staff identified that a blend valve on RO Unit #2—despite not being in active service—was stuck in the open position. This created a false flow reading within the system. Because chlorine feed rates are automatically calculated based on total water production from both RO Unit #1 and Unit #2, the system interpreted a higher-than-actual water flow and temporarily increased chlorine dosing.

HMU immediately notified the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). After review, IDNR confirmed that this situation did not constitute a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violation and posed no risk to public health. As such, no public notification was required.

In the interest of transparency, HMU is voluntarily sharing this information with customers. Further investigation by SCADA system integrators determined that a coding error prevented the blend valve from resetting properly unless RO Unit #2 completed a full normal shutdown sequence. The coding issue has since been corrected.

As of 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22, chlorine levels have returned to normal operating ranges.

HMU remains committed to providing safe, reliable drinking water and maintaining open communication with the community.

Harlan Municipal Utilities
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We highly encourage citizens to sign up for the Alert Iowa notifications for time sensitive information that affects the area you live. You can request to receive notification via phone call, text, email or all of the above. You will only get notifications that affect you according to the address you register with. So just because your neighbor gets a notification doesn't mean that you will. The Alert Iowa system sends out reminders every 6 months to update your information. Sign up at <https://smart911.com>.

HMU also posts on our Facebook page as a convenience for those that use social media but the Alert Iowa system should be your first resource in an emergency situation.

As always if you have an urgent service issue please call 712-755-5182 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.