

# The Blessed 'Event'

ASDWA Webinar

February 14, 2012

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**Fairfax**  **Water**

# The Blessed Event

- \* What's involved
- \* Who do you talk to
- \* Who do you know
  - \* Time to make new friends
- \* Sending out the 'announcement'
- \* When can we pass out cigars

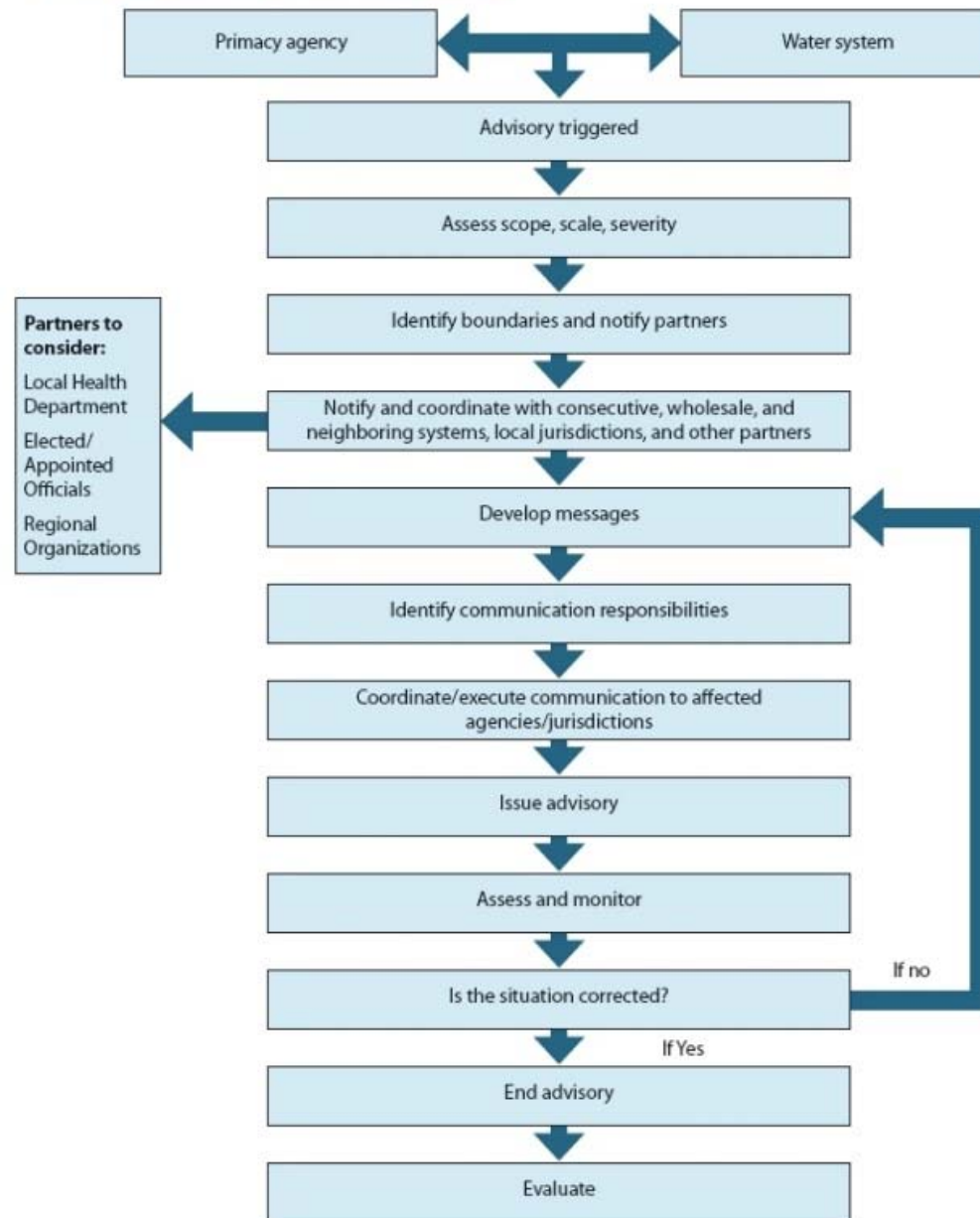
Initiating

Preparing

Distributing

Ending

Figure 4: Issuing a Drinking Water Advisory Flow Chart



# Initiating the Advisory

- \* Collect the facts
- \* Talk with your Primacy Agency
  - \* Decision time
- \* Where is it?
- \* Internal and External Partners
  - \* Who else?



**Figure 5: Example of a Simple Map to Designate an Area Affected by a Drinking Water Advisory**



- \* Collect
- \* Talk
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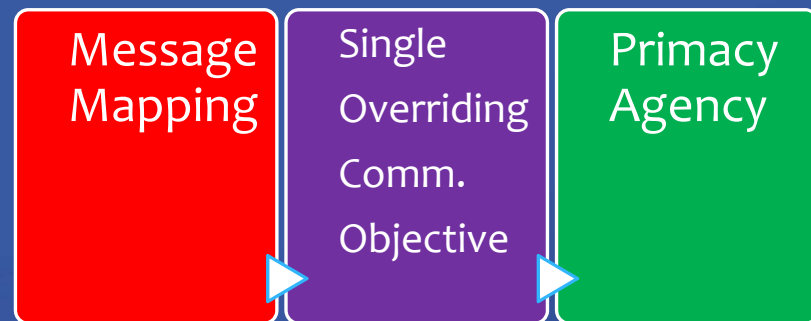
# Initiating the Advisory

- \* Collect the facts
- \* Talk with your Primacy Agency
  - \* Decision time
- \* Where is it?
- \* Internal and External Partners
  - \* Who else?



# Preparing an Advisory

- \* Talk to your Privacy Agency
- \* Talk to your Partners
- \* How will you determine the message?
- \* Who will deliver the message?
- \* Who needs to approve the message?



# Preparing an Advisory

- \* **Required Elements of a Public Notice**

- \* All public notices must include a clear and readily understandable explanation of each violation containing the following 10 elements from EPA's Public Notification Rule (PNR) Quick Reference Guide.
- \* 1. Description of the violation or situation including contaminant(s) of concern and the contaminant level(s).
- \* 2. When the violation or situation occurred.
- \* 3. Potential health effects, including any standard language provided in the PNR.
- \* 4. Population(s) at risk.
- \* 5. Whether alternate water supplies should be used.
- \* 6. Actions consumers should take.
- \* 7. What the water system is doing to correct the violation or situation.
- \* 8. When the water system expects to return to compliance or resolve the situation.
- \* 9. Name, business address, and phone number of the water system owner, operator, or designee who can provide additional information.
- \* 10. A statement encouraging the recipient to share the notice with other persons served using standard language.



# Preparing an Advisory

- \* Toolbox is ready “off-the-shelf”
  - \* Advisory templates
  - \* Frequently Asked Questions
  - \* Spanish language version
  - \* Press Release template
  - \* Spokesperson statement checklist
  - \* Abbreviated message template
  - \* More....

# Distributing an Advisory

- \* Talk to your Primacy Agency
- \* Talk to your Boss – and your Boss' Boss
- \* Use your friends
  - \* One message – many voices
- \* Media mayhem – and other forms of communication
  - \* Automated messages, door-to-door, website, social media

# Ending an Advisory

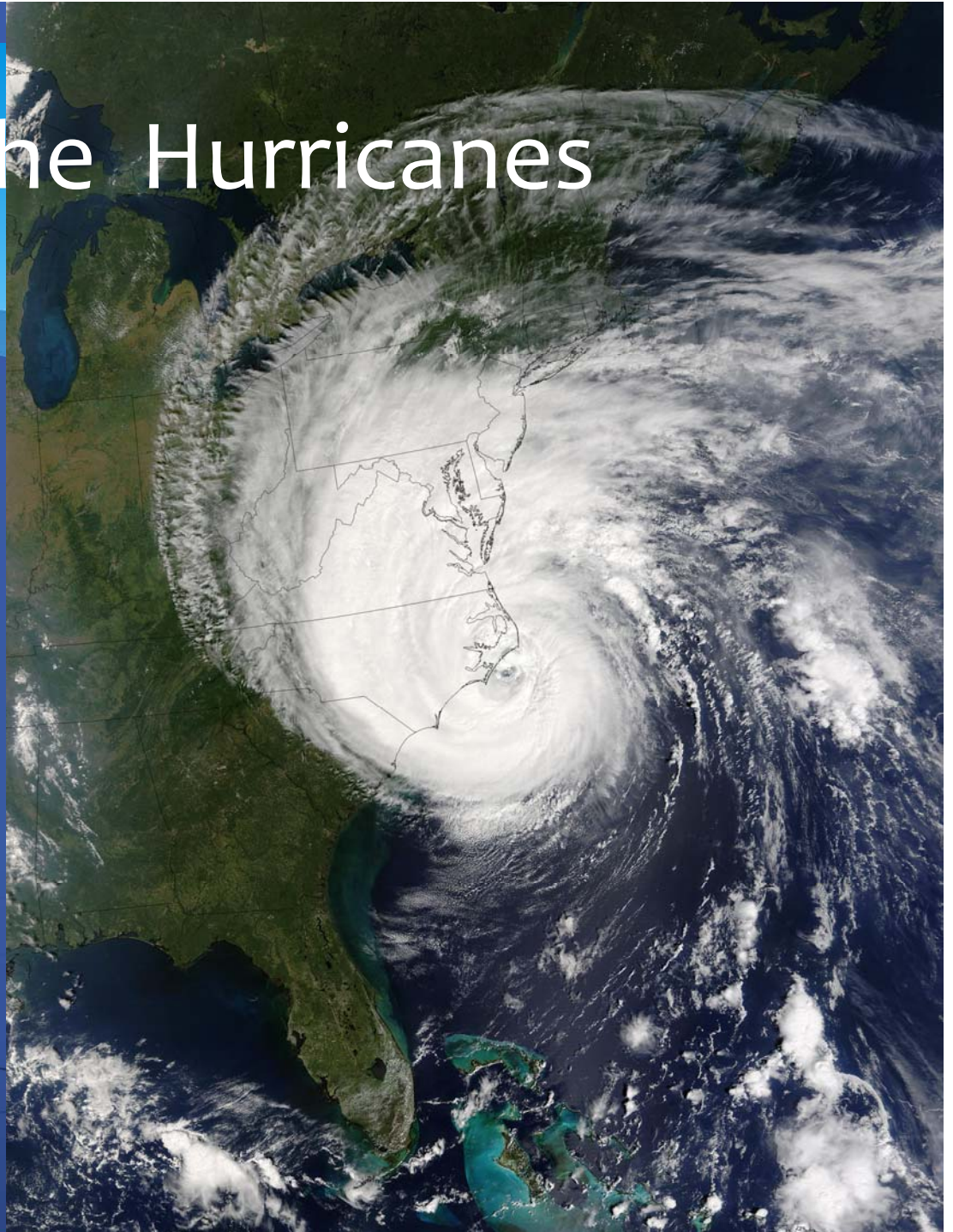
- \* Talk to your...Primacy Agency
- \* Talk to your Partners
- \* Talk to your Boss and Your Boss' Boss

Yes – there is a theme...

- \* Talk to the media
- \* Talk to your customers
- \* Be prepared to keep talking...

# One of the Hurricanes

- \* Hurricane Isabel made landfall on Thursday, September 18, 2004 at 11:50 a.m. on the coast of North Carolina



# Isabel

- \* Dominion Power lost power to 80+% in VA
- \* Fairfax Water lost power intermittently throughout the day
- \* Fairfax Water staff in County EOC
- \* Most of County without power



# Isabel

- \* Lost power to both treatment plants ~ 11 p.m., Thursday, Sept 18th
- \* Started losing pressure in northern and western parts of system ~ 4 a.m., Friday, Sept 19th
- \* Issued bottled water notice at 5 a.m.
- \* Call volume picked up dramatically ~ 6 a.m.
- \* Began receiving email complaints ~ 7 a.m.

# Isabel

- \* Power restored to largest treatment plant at Noon on Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. (approximately 13 hours without power)
- \* Pressure restored in system by midnight Friday, Sept 19<sup>th</sup>
- \* Water quality testing begun at midnight Friday

# PR/Customer Service Actions

- \* PIO in constant contact with County PIO at EOC
- \* Wrote Press Release for Boil Water notice when power lost at ~11 p.m. on 9/18
- \* Called in Customer Service reps ~ 4 a.m. on 9/19
  - \* Changed recorded response on phone system to reflect boil water notice



# PR/Customer Service Actions

- \* Issued press release announcing Boil Water Notice jointly with County at 5 a.m. 9/19
- \* Called in webmaster ~ 9 a.m.
- \* Published first announcement on website ~10:30 a.m. (had received ~ 50 email complaints)
- \* Several radio and TV interviews throughout day
- \* PIO moved to County EOC w/embedded reporters at 1 p.m. 9/19

# PR/Customer Service Actions

- \* Updated website to reflect return of power at WTP Friday afternoon
- \* Continued interviews w/press Friday and Saturday
- \* Updated website Saturday to reflect water quality sampling
- \* Boil water notice lifted, Sunday, Sept 21<sup>st</sup> at 7 p.m.

# Things we didn't expect

- \* Vulnerability – 2 plants – 2 power feeds on 2 different substations from 2 different transmission lines – failed
- \* Power failure was not uniform
  - \* Emails at 7 a.m. on Friday complaining about lack of water

# Things we learned

- \* Website was a much more powerful tool than we had contemplated
- \* Normal monthly requests for pages = 1 million pages/month
  - \* August 2003 total pages transferred = 1.1 million
  - \* September 2003 total pages transferred = 6.9 million
- \* September 19-22, daily pages transferred = 1.4 million pages/day

# More things we learned

- \* When phone systems were overwhelmed – people turned to the website
- \* We were not as prepared as we wanted to be to put messages on website
- \* We needed to date stamp messages on website
  - \* When we added a date stamp – complaints slowed down – even though the message did not change

# Then Lead happened

- \* January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the *Washington Post* announced elevated lead level in Washington D.C.
- \* We got a chance to apply some lessons learned
  - \* New phone message
  - \* Lead message on front page of website – linked to Q&A

- \* Experienced increased call volume for about a week (daily articles in *Washington Post*)
- \* Continued to update Q&A on website – with new date stamps daily
- \* Received relatively few requests for samples - ~140

# Lessons for the future

- \* Add webmaster to list of essential personnel
- \* Keep messages updated – if only with a date stamp
- \* Awareness that the web is a VERY powerful tool!



# Ammonia Incident – March 26, 2007

- \* Overfeed of Ammonia occurred at one of our treatment plants
- \* Distribution system closest to plant has very noticeable levels of ammonia
  - \* Local hazmat team responds to customer's home
- \* Communication strategy implemented

# Paths of Communication

- \* Message on Website
- \* Pre-recorded message on phone system
- \* Collaboration with Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs
- \* Media release
- \* Reverse 911
- \* Community Emergency Alert Network

# Website Usage

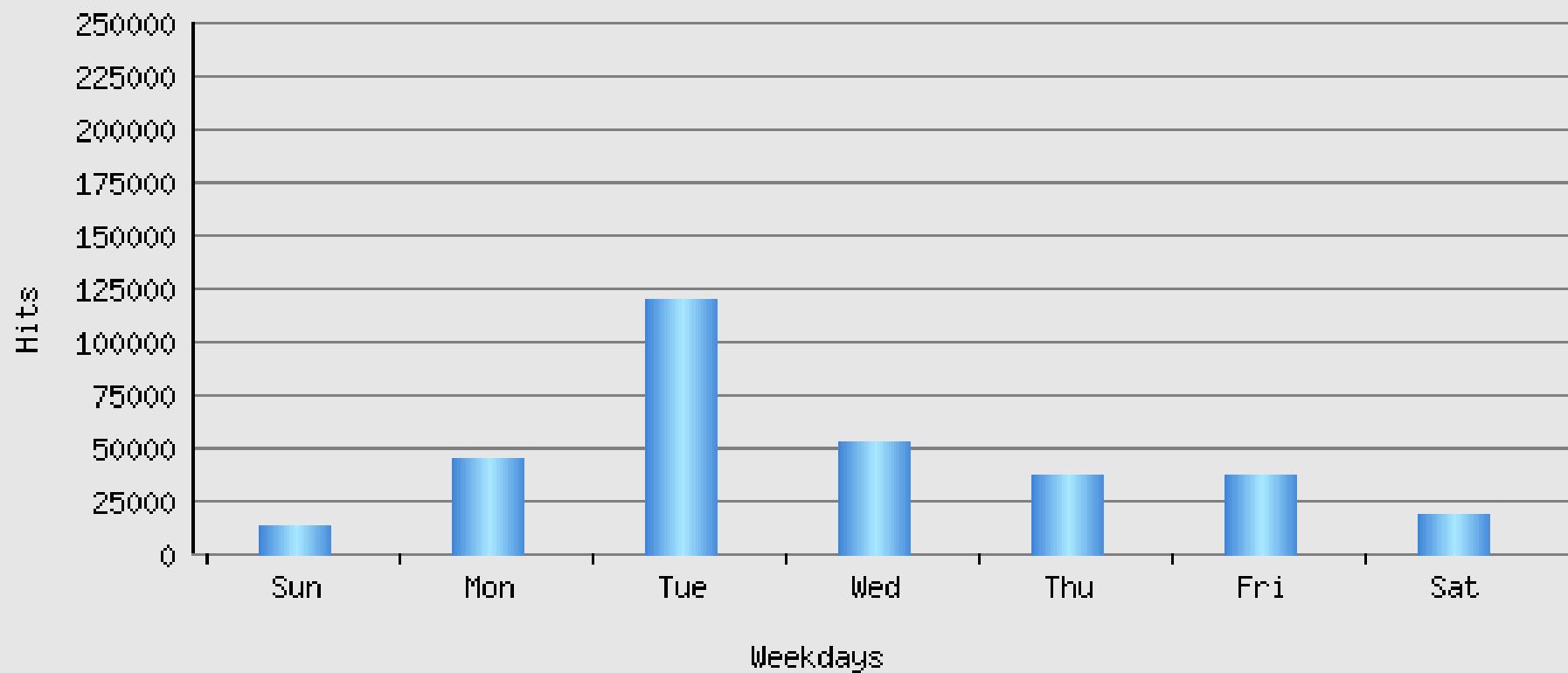
	Typical Week	March 25-31
Total Visitors	~7,100	~11,000

~65% increase over typical usage

# Website Usage Data

## March 25-31, 2007

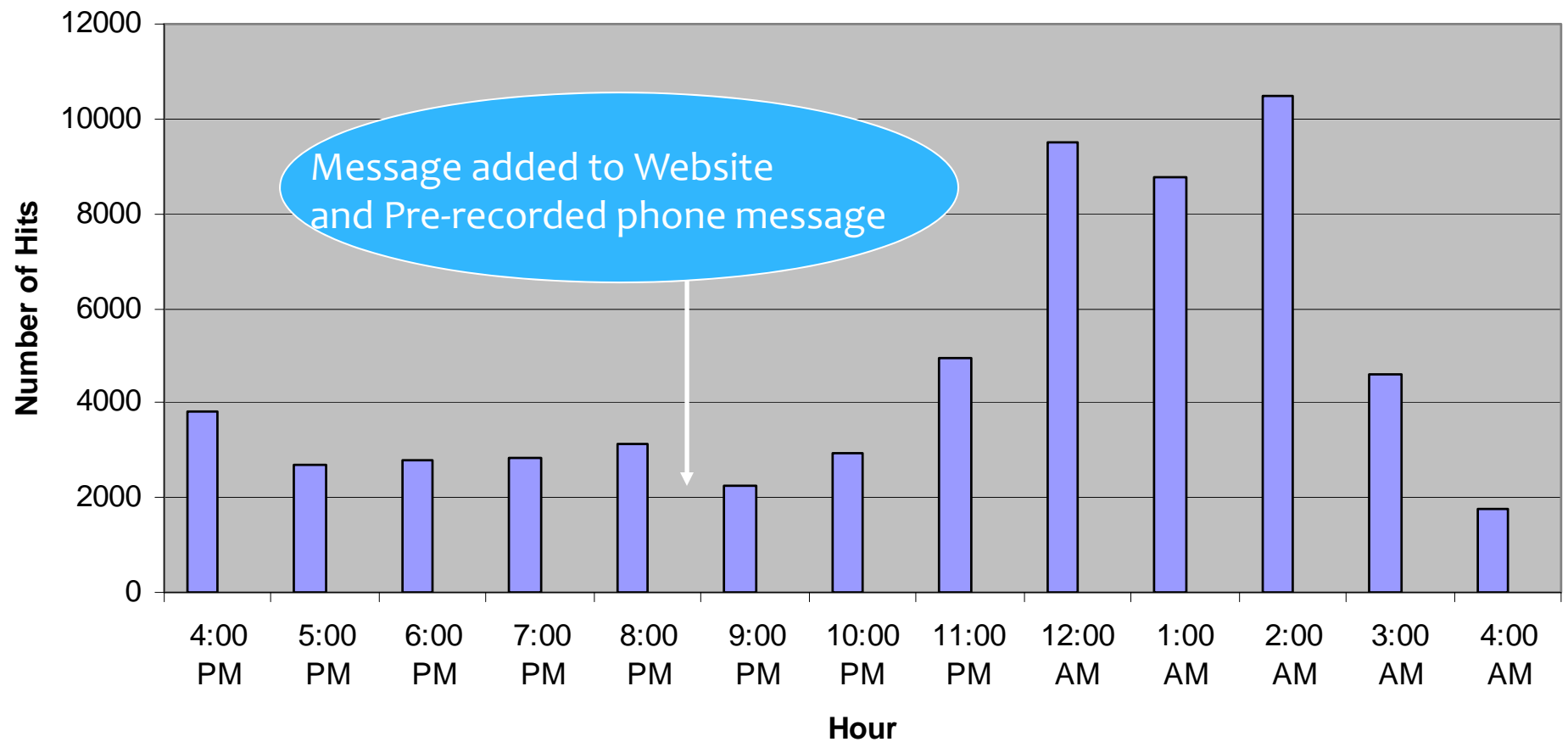
Hits in day of week



# Website Usage Data

## March 26-27, 2007

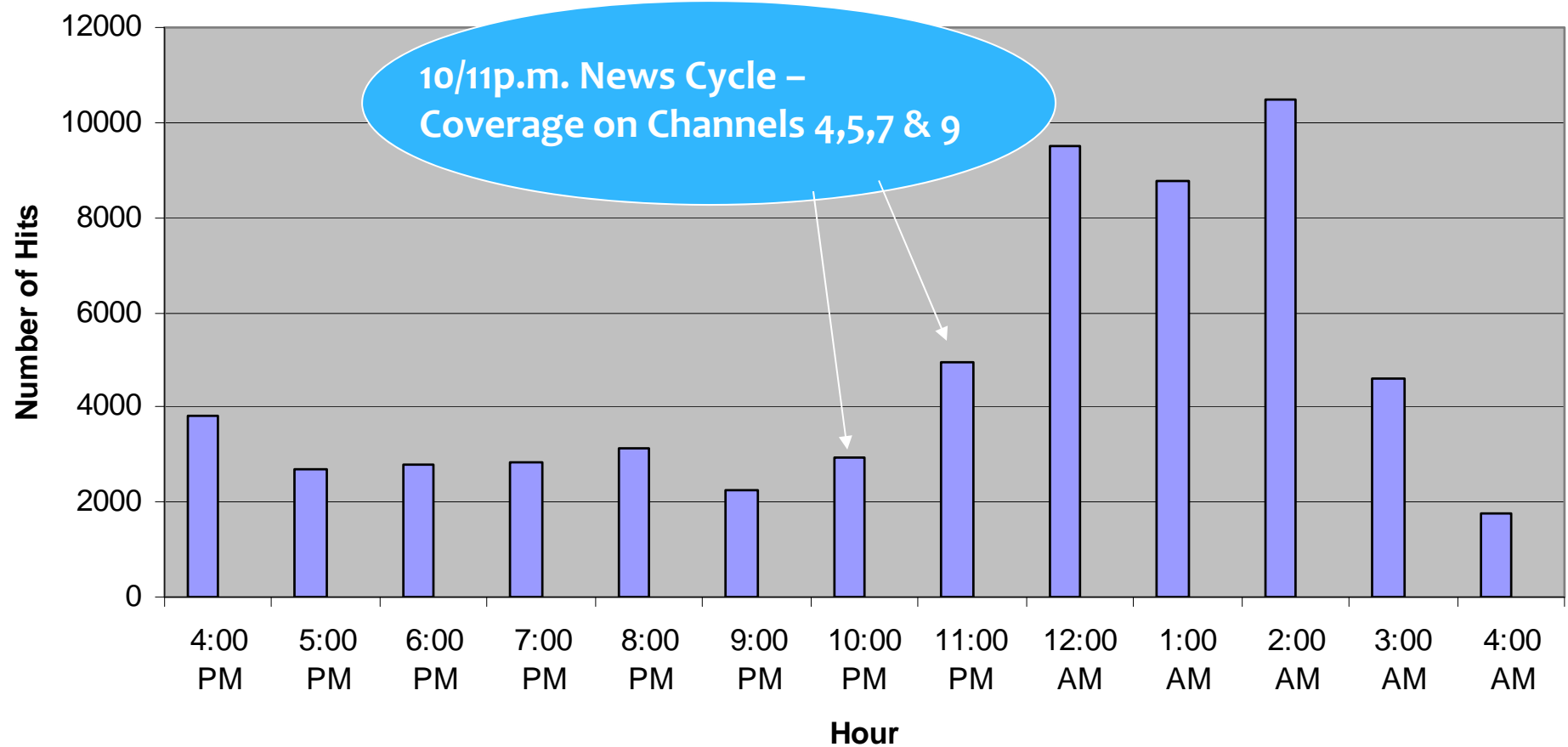
Site Hits- From 4 pm to 4 am
















# Website Usage Data


## March 26-27, 2007

Site Hits- From 4 pm to 4 am



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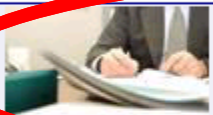
http://www.fairfaxwater.org/  Go Lin

SEARCH FAQs ARCHIVES INDEX DIRECTIONS

# Fairfax Water

Our Quality is Clear

8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA 22031 - Phone 703-698-5600




[A Letter to Our Customers Affected by the Ammonia Incident on March 26th](#)

## Fairfax Water provides water to 1.3 million people

Fairfax Water is Virginia's largest water utility, serving one out of every five Virginians who obtain their water from public utilities. More than 1.3 million people in the Northern Virginia communities of Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and Alexandria depend on Fairfax Water for superior drinking water.

That's 1.3 million friends, neighbors and family members. We don't need any other reason to demand the highest in water quality standards.... [\(More\)](#)



## Annual Water Main Flushing

## Highlights

### Fairfax Water Receives 2006 Honor Award

The Community Appearance Alliance of Northern Virginia presented Fairfax Water with a 2006 Honor Award for distinguished contribution to community appearance for the Frederick P. Griffith, Jr. Water Treatment Plant and Visitor Education Center in Loudoun Hill Virginia.

Internet

# Website Usage Data

## GM's Letter

- \* Slow start
  - \* First week (4/4-4/11) only ~150 visitors to letter
- \* Ended up with about 4,000



# Contact

Thanks!

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Fairfax Water

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703-289-6291