Trust Matters: SCWC Webinar

Kaylee Weatherly, APR

Public Information Officer

Long Beach Water

Long Beach Water

- Retail water agency serving Long Beach residents and businesses
- Drinking water provider and wastewater collector
- Part of umbrella of City of Long Beach
  - Allows us to participate in the Joint Information Center

COVID-19 Crisis

- Long Beach Water made a series of announcements in response
- Used crisis communications best practices to manage efforts
- Proactive, and in some ways, reactive
- Also lessons learned along the way
- Trust was key factor in how we communicated

Announcements

1. Suspension of water shut offs for non-payment

- Messaging partnership with Mayor
- Best practice: Show empathy for your customer base

Mayor Robert Garcia Retweeted

Robert Garcia
@RobertGarciaLB

Our @LongBeachWater Department has announced a suspension of water shutoffs to continue supporting public health and safety. No one should fear losing their water service because they can't pay a bill during this public health crisis. More actions to help our residents to come.

5:19 PM · Mar 12, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

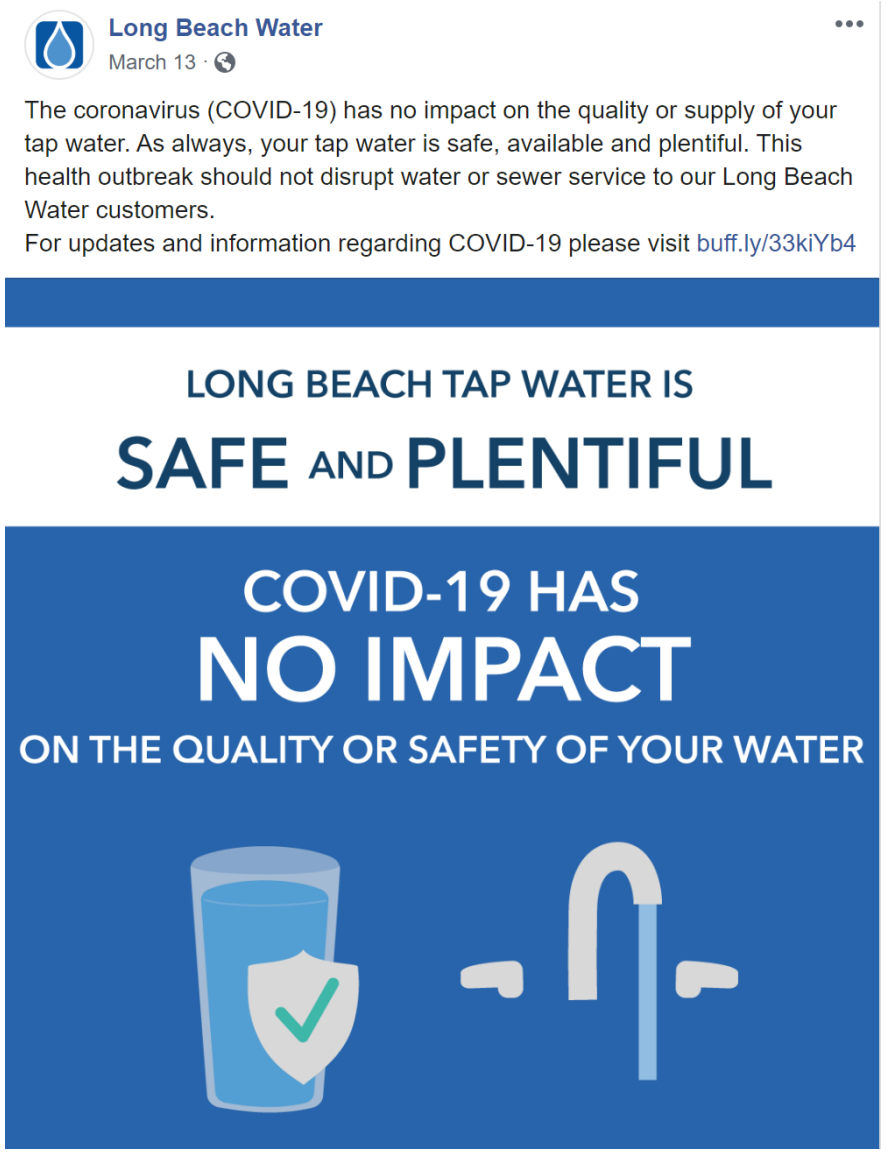
50 Retweets **294** Likes

Announcements

2. Tap water is safe to drink

- Tool – social media
  - Why? Most people are getting quick news from feeds

- Best practice: Get message out early and often



Crisis Developing - Message Evolution

New Crisis: Toilet paper in short supply, wipes block pipes

- Tools – video on water quality (still important and timely), now adding on extra layer
- Best practice: Use credible spokesperson

Partnership Opportunities

Joint water quality statement with regional partners (MWD + WRD)

- Advantages: bigger audience and bigger ad budgets

City's Joint Information Center (JIC)

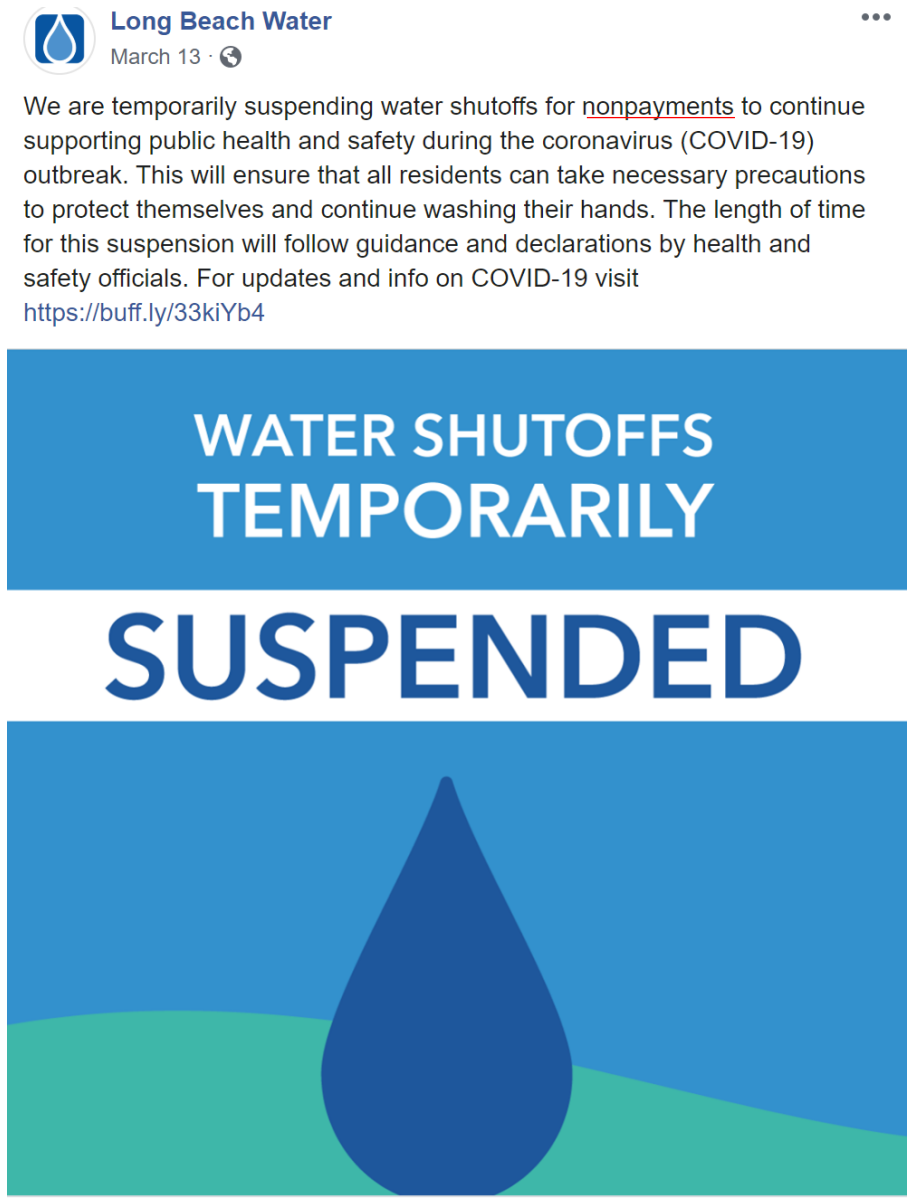
- All messaging on COVID-19 coming from this center

Best practice: Partner with who you can to create unified messaging

Lessons Learned

Posted a graphic on shutoff suspension that caused panic about turning water off to entire city

- Best practice: Make communication simple and clear that doesn't create fear



Results/Anecdotes on Building Trust

Communications and Engagement survey

- 76% see LBWD as a trusted source of info
- 76% moderately to strongly agreed they found LBWD trustworthy

- With people staying at home, they are engaging in more online surveys

- Recommend to put out surveys to your customers

Kaylee Weatherly, APR
Public Information Officer
Kaylee.weatherly@lbwater.org

Long Beach Water
Exceptional Water • Exceptional Service