

**After delays, Abilene to get O.H. Ivie water**

**By Jerry Daniel Reed / Reporter-News Staff Writer  
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Abilene's first water from O.H. Ivie Reservoir should start flowing sometime next month, four months after the contractor had hoped to have completed an \$11 million water treatment plant south of Abilene.

The delay hasn't created a serious water problem for the city, although Mayor Grady Barr reinstated once-weekly watering on Aug. 8 after Lake Fort Phantom Hill's water level fell to 10 feet below spillway. When the water level stands between 5 and 10 feet low, twice-weekly watering is allowed.

Lake Fort Phantom Hill is the city's primary water source. The city also draws water from Hubbard Creek Reservoir near Breckenridge. Lake Ivie will be the city's third water source.

Last spring, city officials and the contractor MW Builders, Inc. had hoped to finish the Hargesheimer Water Treatment Plant in time to provide water all summer, the peak consumption season for water.

But a few glitches have delayed completion of the reverse osmosis water plant project, said Hargesheimer, a consultant to the city after retiring as water utilities director April 30. The treatment plant was named for him.

The Temple contracting firm contends some subcontracting work wasn't completed on time, putting the project behind from the start, Hargesheimer said. The July 2002 flood further delayed the project, he said. Then a backhoe accidentally punctured a water line, causing a leak that wasn't immediately discovered, he said.

"This is not uncommon, for something like this to happen with totally new construction," he said.

With a contracted "substantial completion" date in early June, the contractor faces potential penalties of \$2,000 a day, though Hargesheimer said the contractor and the city typically negotiate damages after the contract is finished, taking into account justifiable delays.

The delay is far from the longest he's seen, Hargesheimer said. In 1971, the city's Northeast Water Treatment Plant didn't perform properly for a whole year after it was supposed to have been completed, he said.

Once the treatment plant starts producing potable water for south Abilene homes, the city plans to keep the water flowing without interruption. The filters the plant will use to remove impurities from the water last longer if they don't dry out, Hargesheimer explained.

Rodney Taylor, interim director of water utilities, said the Hargesheimer plant will treat a minimum of 3 million gallons of potable water a day year-round. The plant capacity is 8 million gallons a day, and it can be expanded to treat 16 million gallons.

Three million gallons a day amounts to about 10 percent of the city's water consumption during the hottest, driest part of the summer. Since Barr declared once-weekly watering effective Aug. 8, Abilene's daily consumption has hovered near 30 million gallons a day most days. Abilene has caught only a trace of precipitation in August.

The treatment plant is the last remaining piece of the puzzle for the \$65 million pipeline project, which the city council approved two years ago. The 52.5-mile pipeline will enable Abilene to exploit its share of water from the O.H. Ivie Reservoir 18 years after the city bought into the project.

The Colorado River Municipal Water District owns the lake southeast of Ballinger, with non-member cities Abilene, San Angelo and Midland each holding a 16.54 percent share of the lake's water. This amounts to about 15,000 acre-feet a year for each city. An acre-foot is 325,851 gallons.

The remainder of the lake's water is allocated to member cities Snyder, Big Spring and Odessa plus district customers. A ceremony dedicating the Hargesheimer plant is planned for Oct. 22. Contact public affairs writer Jerry Daniel Reed at [reedj@reporternews.com](mailto:reedj@reporternews.com) or 325-676-6769