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NC water crisis affecting Triangle health facilities

By WWAY

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The water crisis is the most serious health problem facing the region. That's the word from a top state health official as local water supplies continue to dry up.

It started off as a threat to lush lawns across the triangle. Now the [drought](#) [1] is more than an inconvenience, according to the state's epidemiologist, Dr. Jeff Engel.

Engel said, "Right now it's the most serious health problem we're facing. That's because the triangle is a hub for healthcare."

Deb Friberg with Wake Med said, "A lot of what we do in healthcare requires water."

Wake Med, like most local hospitals uses water for everything from sanitation to sterilizing equipment to maintaining humidity levels in hospital rooms.

Duke University Medical Center is one of Durham County's major water consumers. Durham's Lake Michie has 38 days of water left. And if the tap should run dry...

Duke university's Robert Guerry said, "It would mean a difference in our operations if it came to that point. It would mean potable water for drinking and sterilizations."

It would also mean water shipped in from outside the state.

Friberg said, "Those would be, as I consider it, temporary solutions. I think long-term would be, how do we reduce the water we use by substituting tap water for bottled water. That's something hospitals like Rex in Raleigh are prepared to do if backup water supplies run low."

It's a scary scenario when you're in the business of saving lives, and it's one administrators want to avoid.

Friberg said, "I'm kind of hoping we can find a solution from a conservation standpoint so that for critical situations we'll have the water we'll need."

From fixing leaks to using hand sanitizers instead of soap and water, local hospitals say they're doing everything they can to conserve.

 [2]

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