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### NEWS RELEASE

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## WATER ADVISORY ISSUE REVEALS NEED IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFRASTRUCTURE

*Public Response Shows Oregon's Community Spirit*

(SALEM) – With the latest test results revealing that drinking water in Salem and other communities continues to be unsafe for small children and others with health problems, Senate President Peter Courtney said Friday that local and state officials need to start working now to be better equipped for the next emergency.

“Whether it’s the next algae bloom or a devastating Cascadia earthquake, we have to be better prepared. We need timely access to critical information. We have to communicate better. We have to do a better job of meeting the needs of our people,” Courtney said. “It’s been clear this week that our emergency response infrastructure is not what it needs to be.”

State lawmakers, he said, should be prepared to consider needed investments in Oregon’s emergency response infrastructure.

The Senate President has talked with the heads of the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Emergency Management to discuss their efforts to ensure that the state is better equipped to deal with emergencies in the future – including providing necessary aid to local jurisdictions. He also advised them to be prepared for a legislative hearing on the subject in September.

Courtney said he has been encouraged by the response to the situation by Salem residents; city and county employees working around the clock to distribute water; and other municipalities which have made water distribution equipment available for use in Salem and other affected communities.

“I’ve seen people going door-to-door to make sure their neighbors have clean water for their children to drink. I’ve seen neighborhoods and cities come together to share resources,” Courtney said. “At the distribution points, dedicated workers were out all night making sure families who need water could get it. The water is from Keizer. The distribution tanks are from Eugene and Portland. People helping people is how we’ll get through this. It’s how Oregon will get through any challenge – no matter how large.”

Courtney said he just wants to make certain that Oregon’s emergency response infrastructure is up to the standard set by the resolve and resourcefulness of its people.

Courtney said events surrounding the issuance of water toxin advisories this week brings up five key issues which need to be addressed.

- City and state agencies should work to reduce the time between when water samples are gathered and when results are returned, whenever possible.
- Local governments should be prepared to distribute safe drinking water to affected persons in the event of contamination.
- Local and state officials need to fix the technical issues and clear up communications failures that led to an alarming generic emergency alert sent by the Oregon Office of Emergency Management to cell phones throughout the Willamette Valley Tuesday evening. OEM is conducting an after-action review to determine what happened this week and prevent confusing messages in the future.
- Retailers should be aware that Oregon has laws to prevent unfairly raising prices of products suddenly in short supply. Anyone who believes they have been the victim of price gouging or has information about potential price gouging should file a complaint at [oregonconsumer.gov](http://oregonconsumer.gov) or call the Attorney General's consumer hotline at 877-877-9392.
- Water testing requirements should be reviewed, along with procedures for notifying the public about positive results for water toxins.