

Bracing for worst in waterless Metro

Local governments take measures to ensure adequate water supply for residents

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 28 Oct 2019 · A10 · —STORY BY MEG ADONIS AND MATTHEW REYSIO-CRUZ

Some businesses are bracing for the worst as water concessionaires schedule service interruptions due to Angat Dam's depleted stock. The owner of a laundromat in Valenzuela City, for instance, said she would have no choice but to stop operations. Shop owners and residents are advised to stock up on water by installing rain catchment systems and drawing from deep wells.

As water concessionaires implement a new round of rotational service interruptions due to Angat Dam's declining levels, owners of businesses heavily dependent on a reliable water supply are bracing themselves for the worse.

"Once water service interruptions happen, we consume entirely the supply we have [stored] in our tank and in that situation, we are forced to stop operations," Alma Jose, a worker in a laundromat on Macarthur Highway in Valenzuela City, told the Inquirer.

Based on the advisory issued by Maynilad Water Services Inc., parts of Valenzuela City would have dry taps from 10 a.m. to 5 a.m. the next day, or a total of 19 hours.

Jose said that on weekends, they would usually serve as many as 40 to 50 customers in the self-service laundry shop which was open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

But when they run out of water, they could sometimes serve only half of their clients, she added.

"We get their contact numbers instead and ask them to leave their laundry here. Once [the] water supply returns, we just get in touch with them so they can come back," Jose said.

Arnaldo Antonio, head of Valenzuela's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, said that while the city government had promised help, including financial aid, to smalltime businesses affected by the ongoing service interruptions, they (traders) should also stock up on water to meet customers' demands.

"It's not that we don't understand their plight. But small businesses and residents would be having the same experience, so they should store whatever they could," he said.

Antonio said that the city had enough deep wells to provide the precious commodity, as well as 20 fire trucks that could be deployed to affected barangays.

"We could also tap the local government of neighboring Bulacan province should the [whole of] Valenzuela City run out of water," he added.

Antonio said that the city had also required private and government buildings to install rain catchment facilities so that the stored water could be used by residents for

nondrinking purposes.

Monthly reports

In Quezon City, water concessionaires must now submit monthly reports on efforts to fix leaks and crack down on illegal connections—a new requirement meant to stave off the worst effects of a looming water shortage, the local government said on Sunday.

The more aggressive monitoring by Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. was aimed at hopefully reducing the amount of water lost to easily remediable issues.

The Department of the Building Official was also asked to expedite the processing of excavation permits submitted by concessionaires for emergency repairs, while barangay officials were instructed to take part in monitoring individual households and offices for leaks.

These were among several orders issued by Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte to the private concessionaires and government agencies, which were directed in an Oct. 21 memorandum to undertake initiatives to curb the city's water usage.

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office was tasked to work with Manila Water and Maynilad for the use of their treated wastewater, which the concessionaires pledged to provide for the upkeep of public parks and the Bureau of Fire Protection's operations.

The General Services Department (GSD) and City Engineering Department were also ordered to inventory all schools and cityowned buildings, with an eye on installing rainwater harvesting systems, water storage tanks and toilets with a half-flush option.

“The GSD will record baseline data on water consumption per office, building and barangay and come up with an incentive scheme for those who will be able to reduce their water consumption per month,” the city government said.