

Saipan's Water Problem Worsens

SAIPAN (MNS) — Saipan authorities have again extended the hours during which water supplies are shut off. An extended dry period and continuing high losses of fresh water continue to worsen the distribution system.

The Saipan Utility Agency has been forced to close four deep wells on the island because the water table is so low they are getting no usable water from them and another deep well is nearly empty. An agency spokesman said that despite the heavy rain of the past few days, the water problems are expected to continue.

It has now been nearly two years since Saipan was without "water hours." Currently, most island users have water during the daylight hours, but it is turned off at night until the following morning. These hours will be extended even further unless water is conserved, the utilities spokesman said.

He noted Saipan has been experiencing an exceptionally long period of little rainfall, but that the water system is still producing enough fresh water to serve the present population, and to build up a storage reserve, if it were not for leakage and wastage.

At present, however, nearly all of the water produced goes into the distribution system, with little left over for storage. Saipan Utility Agency officials estimate that between three-quarters and a million gallons of water a day are lost through leaking pipes and through deliberate wasting.

A project to replace old and leaking pipes will take up to six months more to complete.