



# On the Water Front

June 2019 | **A Message from John Balliew, P.E., President/CEO**

## Partners, EPWater urge water safety

Never underestimate the power of water.

At a time when our river water delivery is filling El Paso's waterways— coupled with a recent influx of migrants crossing our border with Mexico— those words have never been so important.

### Rising peril

Record low storage levels at Elephant Butte forced the delay of El Paso Water's river water delivery this year from March to May. Water was released from Caballo Reservoir on May 31, making its way into our water plants and waterways around June 5. Along with the delay, there was an alarming new trend distinguishing this year from the rest – a deluge of migrant families streaming across the border.

The rising potential for fatalities during the annual release of Rio Grande water prompted EPWater to take our annual water safety warnings to a new level. We joined forces with organizations such as the El Paso Fire Department, the Drowning Prevention Coalition and the Hope Border Institute to spread our message. Public safety is a priority for us all.

Our combined efforts continue, with the Hope Border Institute distributing our posters to shelters in Mexico, urging migrants not to cross waterways. The El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 is also reaching out to migrant families in Ciudad Juárez shelters, warning them not to risk crossing the river.

### Take heed

The El Paso Fire Department cautions migrants about the uncertainty of flowing waterways, which can hide swift-moving currents, and canals of up to 10 feet deep.

The data is frightening:

- 6 inches of rushing water can knock people off their feet.
- 6 inches of water will reach the bottom of most vehicles, causing loss of control or stalling.
- Young children can drown in less than 2 inches of water.

Recent news reports of migrant drownings are alarming. It is never safe to drive or walk into flood waters.

Our safety message is so urgent, it bears repeating. Please don't underestimate the force of the Rio Grande or water flowing in canals, arroyos or even city streets. The danger is sure to multiply this monsoon season, with intense thunderstorms that sometimes overpower many of our streets that are designed to carry stormwater. Please be aware of changing weather conditions, which may result in flooding, and spread the word. **Turn Around Don't Drown.**



El Paso Water's Alan Shubert, Vice President of Operations and Technical Services, joined forces with the El Paso Fire Department and the Drowning Prevention Coalition of El Paso to warn migrants of the dangers of trying to cross the full river and canals.



On the Water Front is a publication of El Paso Water.  
Contact Christina Montoya at **915.594.5596** or [cmontoya@epwater.org](mailto:cmontoya@epwater.org) with any comments or questions.

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