

## WATER MAIN FLUSHING Q&A

Water main flushing is a routine operation done to clean and maintain our water system. During this activity, water is forced through underground water mains at high speed and flushed out of fire hydrants to remove accumulated sediment. This flushing is done until the water coming through the main runs clear. Flushing the water distribution system simply means opening fire hydrants and flush valves in specific areas in order for fresh water to replace the water standing in the lines. This is done one section at a time until each section runs clear. This operation can take a few minutes to several hours.

### Q. Why is flushing important?

A. The flushing is important so the WVPWD can provide a reliable, safe drinking water supply, a flushing program is used to improve water quality, restore water pressure and protect pipe integrity while removing sediment that slowly builds up at the bottom of the water main over time. The sediment comes from internal corrosion of the water mains over many years.

### Q. Is water main cleaning a waste of water?

A. No, this is a normal and necessary part of maintaining a safe and reliable drinking water supply. If water is discharged into the environment, it will soak back into the groundwater basins for reuse. To clean the pipes effectively, water must be discharged from the fire hydrants with sufficient speed and volume. The flow is stopped as soon as the water is clear so that only the amount needed to clean the system is released into the street. Safety, regulatory, and logistical considerations prevent us from capturing this water for reuse.

### Q. How often is flushing operations conducted?

A. Flushing operations are conducted as needed throughout the system. The areas of our system that have dead-end mains, where water can become stagnant, are flushed on an as needed basis.

During flushing operation, residents may hear water discharging with force from the hydrants and see water flowing in the streets. Drivers are asked to take extra care during this time so as to avoid hydroplaning and other hazardous conditions.

### Q. How will I be affected by the flushing of the lines?

A. Things you may experience during and after a flushing of a main water line is the experience of temporary periods of low water pressure. Flushing operations may also lead to brown or discolored water, which can be drawn into homes and businesses if the water is being used during or immediately following the flushing. This is a temporary condition and should only affect customers for a few hours at most. ***The discoloration can stain porcelain and laundry. It is best to make sure your water is clear before doing laundry or other projects for which discolored water could cause problems.*** If discoloration occurs, open the cold tap nearest the water main – usually the front outside faucet – to full flow and run the water into your garden or lawn for a few minutes until it is clear. If the water does not clear the first time, wait a few minutes and run the water again. Also, it is important to not run hot water if you notice it is discolored, as the discolored water can be drawn into the hot water tank.

**Q. Is the water safe to drink if it is discolored?**

A. Yes. The water is safe to drink although not visually pleasant. The temporary discoloration is caused by minerals and other fine particles, such as iron and manganese, which are not harmful to your health and are found in every drinking water system.

To clear your water:

- WVPWD advises customers to flush a cold tap for a few minutes, for up to 15 minutes maximum. Do not choose a tap that has a water filter connected to it, or the sediment may clog your filter. Do not use a hot water tap because it could draw sediment into your hot water tank.
- Catch some water in a light colored cup or container, if it is clear, you can use your water.
- If the water coming from the tap doesn't clear in five minutes, wait 30 minutes and try again.

**Q. How will I be affected?**

A. Flushing will generally occur between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. for most neighborhoods. Specific hydrants will be used to discharge water. There may be a slight drop in pressure or noticeable discoloration of the water from the minerals and sediments that are being flushed out. Water service should not be disrupted during the flushing process.

**Q. What about water pressure and safety?**

A. Flushing may cause short-term pressure fluctuations along with sediments in the water reaching your home or business, try to not use water during this time. Your water remains safe, meeting if not exceeding all water quality standards.

**Q. What do I do about a Chlorine smell?**

A. WVPWD adds only enough chlorine in the treatment process to keep the water safe for consumption. Customers can easily get rid of the chlorine taste and smell by filling an open container with water and keeping it in the fridge for drinking – much of the chlorine will leave the water overnight.

**Q. How does unidirectional flushing (UDF) work?**

A. During the UDF process water is forced through the water mains at a high speed and discharged through hydrants. The fast moving water scours and cleans the mains. We leave the hydrants open until the water runs clear.

**Q. How will I know when WVPWD is cleaning the water mains in my neighborhood?**

A. A tentative schedule and updated information may be posted on the district website at: <https://wwwater.myruralwater.com> prior to starting the flushing program.

**Q. What should I do if my water is discolored after WVPWD has flushed the water mains?**

A. Water is sometimes discolored after water main cleaning, but this should not last long. In the event customers draw discolored water into the home, flush a cold tap only a few minutes, up to 15 minutes maximum. As a precaution, prior

to using hot water run the cold water tap for a few minutes to ensure discolored water is not drawn into the hot water tank.

**Q. What should I do if the water is still discolored after three to four hours?**

A. Contact WVPWD office at (337) 238-2656.

**Q. How long does it take to clean the water mains on each street?**

A. It takes about 30 minutes to 60 minutes to flush the water mains on each street.

**Q. Why can't WVPWD clean the water mains at night?**

A. It's safer for staff to work on the streets in daylight. Also, daylight provides better visibility to see when all the sediment has been flushed out and the water is running clear.