

Addressing Impacts to Customers from Flushing

Often during biannual flushing of the water system, or during unusual incidents like main breaks and fires that require large water withdrawal from the hydrants, the water quality in the distribution system is affected and customers experience dirty water in their homes. There is issues and confusion regarding the need, and procedures, for flushing individual customer service lines and building plumbing in response to this situation. Here are a few of the facts that the Water Department would like to convey to customers to address these concerns:

- We regret that anyone may have to flush their pipes at all to deal with dirty water. However, fires and breaks are unavoidable, and the Water Department **has to flush the system** and this **may be an unavoidable impact** in some areas. If done correctly the costs and impacts will be minimal
- First, if the water is presently stirred up and dirty in the main in the street, flushing customers pipes will not do any good. **The customers need to wait for the system to settle down and the water to clear.** This may take minutes or a few hours. The Water Department cannot predict how long and it depends on the situation and a number of factors. **The customer in many circumstances will have to wait for a few hours before using water for cooking or drinking.** We recognize this is an inconvenience but this is what the situation requires.
- **It is pointless to flush for long, extended periods to relieve this situation.** It will only make the resident's situation worse. If the resident runs the cold water for more than a few minutes they are only bringing in more dirty water from the main. If the customer runs the hot water, they are only bringing dirty water into their water heater.
- **If the customer does not use any water when the water in the main has been stirred up, no dirty water will get into their pipes.**
- Once the water in the main has settled down, (and again this could take a few minutes or a few hours), then the customer may need to flush any dirty water that has been drawn into their service pipe and into their house.
- Assuming a 100 foot service pipe, (which is a long run from the road, most houses will be much shorter) and 200 feet of internal plumbing (which again is generally a conservative estimate) there is just a little over **6 gallons** of water that needs to be flushed. That is all the water that is in the pipes. It could take a little longer to re-suspend any particles or pull it off the walls of the pipes, **but it will take minutes, not hours.**
- Assuming a standard faucet flow of 2.2 gallons per minute, it would take **less than 3 minutes** to flush the service pipe and internal piping. Many faucets may

need to be flushed to get each pipe component flushed but there is no need to run all faucets for extended periods. If you have low flow, opening two faucets concurrently may help flush the service pipe quicker but the time required is still short. The faucet only needs to run to get the dirty water from that section of pipe. For example, once the first floor piping is clear, then only the piping from the first to the second floor fixtures would need flushing and this a short run of pipe.

- In some circumstances it may take a little longer to flush the pipes but **if the customer is running water substantially longer, all they are doing is bringing more dirty water in from the main.** This is counter productive.
- At our current **water and sewer** rates, if the customer has to flush the water for **5 minutes** that costs **8 cents**. We know times are rough but we do not feel that this added expense merits discussion of abatements or personal hardship.

If you have further questions or need more information we ready and willing to discuss this, with anyone. We are doing our best to not cause financial hardship and huge inconvenience to people and we are doing everything we can to avoid any problems and correct a bad situation.

Thanks