

FAQ

What is the field crew doing and why?

The Northwestern Water and Sewer District (District) is implementing a common utility maintenance procedure called *unidirectional flushing*. It involves opening specifically selected fire hydrants and closing specifically selected valves under controlled conditions to scour the inner surface of water distribution pipes. The scouring process helps to remove corrosion scale and sediment that accumulate naturally over time. If otherwise left in place, these deposits could degrade water quality and restrict pipeline carrying capacity.

I lost water service. Why, and what do I do?

Though not intentional, this happens from time to time during the flushing program. During flushing, certain valves are closed to provide control over the direction of flow. It is likely that a valve closure resulted in loss of supply to your block. The field crew will be sent to your block immediately to investigate and identify which valves may be closed and need to be re-opened.

Will I be paying for the water used in flushing?

No, each residence and business is individually metered at the service connection to determine consumption. Your utility bill is based on your specific meter readings.

Why does flush water (hydrant or Sink) appear discolored?

The color is due to the presence of solids that are scoured from the surface of the pipes. These may include sand, sediment, iron (rust), and manganese, all of which are naturally occurring and common to virtually every water system. At the levels that cause mild discoloration, these solids are not harmful, although they may impart an undesirable taste to the water.

How do I get rid of the discolored appearance?

Customers are advised to fully open their *cold water faucets* in their kitchen and bathroom to flush this water out of their service piping and plumbing lines. In most cases, the water should begin to run clear again within a minute. If it does not clear, please let us know and we will have a field crew sent to your house to investigate further.

Is the water safe to drink?

Yes, the District has maintained compliance with all state and federal drinking water quality standards. The District performs frequent monitoring throughout the system to ensure the safety and aesthetic quality of your water. Each year, the District prepares the Consumer Confidence Report for all our customers. This report summarizes the results of testing and provides a comparison to regulatory standards. We are performing flushing as a proactive measure to further enhance water quality and help ensure continued compliance.

Is this counterproductive to conservation?

The District strongly values, encourages and practices water conservation measures. In developing the flushing program, the District has considered the impact of water use and weighed it against the known benefits of flushing. While a fair amount of water is used and is necessary to create an effective scour, the District uses a flushing practice called unidirectional flushing that is specifically designed to reduce overall water usage. Also, in a given neighborhood, flushing is conducted relatively infrequently – generally once every few years – so over the long run the amount of water used is relatively small.

Does discharged water affect the environment?

No, The District takes special precautions to ensure that the quantity and quality of the water flushed is safe for disposal. In most cases, the water is sent to either the stormwater collection system, or to a drainage ditch. During flushing, the field crew monitors disposal of the water, reduces its energy to prevent erosion.

Why is the District doing it? Aren't the water pipes clean?

Because water mains are designed to handle fire flow, which may be several times larger than domestic or commercial water flow, the velocity of flow (or rate that water flows through pipes) in most mains is normally fairly low. Due to this, solids may settle on the bottom of the pipes. The problem may be more significant where there are dead-end pipes or areas of low water use. Over time, these deposits reduce the "carrying capacity" of the pipe. They can also be a source of color, odor and taste problems in the water if the deposits are stirred up by increases in the flow. Flushing the pipes at high velocities will normally remove most of the settled substances and discolored or stale water.

What else do Northwestern Water and Sewer District customers need to know to prepare for the flushing process?

During the actual flushing process, water customers may experience some disturbance in their usual water service such as a short-term decrease in water pressure or the appearance of "brown water". Although the water should not pose a health risk, it is best to avoid drinking the water until it runs clear from the tap. Avoid washing clothes during the week of the flushing *in your area* and don't wash if there is a brown tint to the water. Plan ahead and do your laundry over the weekend to avoid the possibility of having stained clothes. If you inadvertently have washed your clothes in "brown or discolored water," **DO NOT USE BLEACH**. This will set the stains in your laundry. Don't prepare baby food or formula if the water is discolored. Use bottled water or pre-prepared food and formula. You can also boil the water for 1 minute to ensure safety. It's often a good idea to use water stored in the refrigerator to drink, even when the flushing program is over. This a good habit to get into in the case of an emergency.

Who do I call with questions?

Any questions or concerns you may have can be directed to District Operations Department at (419) 354-9090 ext. 170

Please check the District's website at www.nwwsd.org for updated information on the locations of the work crews and any other changes.

Thank you for your patience