
WATER MAIN FLUSHING

Why We Flush Mains:

Flushing of the Sherman water distribution system accomplishes several things:

- By systematically opening hydrants and allowing the water to run full force, the utility flushes out minerals, sediment and corrosion products that have settled in the mains.
- Flushing mains serves as an opportunity for our Water Superintendent to perform valve and hydrant inspections for optimal fire protection.
- This process allows the utility to achieve greater flows through its mains.

An alternative to flushing is to add corrosion inhibiting chemicals to the water system. The Village Board prefers that our water department perform water main flushing rather than this alternative because:

- Each time you add a chemical to the water, you change the water's taste, odor, appearance and "mouth feel." Our Water Superintendent firmly believes in adding only the minimum of chlorine needed for disinfection and fluoride for tooth decay prevention.
- The cost of water would escalate due to the cost of the chemicals and monitoring.

Flushing Q&A:

1. When will I see discolored water or will I only see discolored water on the scheduled flushing day?

The greatest likelihood that you will see discolored water is while the Water Department is flushing in your immediate area on your scheduled flushing day. However, please be aware that you may see discolored water at any time during water main flushing, because of the following reasons:

- Flushing disrupts the entire water system and it is difficult to predict exactly when and where discolored water will occur.
- Flushing may occur in your general area over a multi-day period.

With this in mind, please be sure to check for discolored water before doing laundry while BPU daytime flushing is taking place. We suggest that you wait to do laundry on days other than your scheduled flushing day, because the discolored water can stain your clothes (especially white and light-colored clothing).

If it is your scheduled flushing day, we also recommend that you be careful to check for discolored water before using hot water (e.g. to take a shower) during the hours that flushing is set to occur. It may be best to try to take showers or baths before or after (in the early morning or evening) flushing is set to take place on your scheduled flushing day.

2. Why should I be aware of my scheduled flushing day?

The primary precautions that should be taken during water main flushing are to:

- Check for discolored water before doing laundry.
- Try to avoid pulling discolored water into your hot water tank.

If discolored water were to stain your clothes while doing laundry or be pulled into your hot water tank, please see Questions 5 and 6, respectively.

You may also want to check for discolored water before using water for cooking or drinking; we suggest that you store some water a day or so ahead of time so that you have some available for cooking and drinking during your scheduled flushing day. Though discolored water is displeasing to see, please remember that it is safe to drink and to use if needed.

3. How can I check for discolored water in my home?

To check for discolored water, turn on the cold-water spigot in either your bath tub or bathroom sink for a couple of minutes. It is easiest to see discolored water in a white tub or sink. If the water is clear after a couple of minutes, it should indicate that the water out in the water main is clear as well, and therefore, you should be able to resume using your water as usual at that time.

However, if the water is discolored after a couple of minutes, turn the water off and wait for an hour or so until you check again. Discolored water may occur for a period of anywhere up to 24 hours, but during flushing, it typically lasts for a few hours. If discolored water were pulled into your home, continue to check for discolored water (once an hour) until you notice clear water running from the spigot. At this point, you can flush out any additional discolored water that may be left in your household plumbing by running cold water from faucets as necessary until the water runs clear from each faucet.

Additionally, before doing your next load of laundry (especially if you will be washing whites or light colors), you can run your washing machine through one cold wash cycle without clothes to flush out any discolored water that may be present in your washing machine or the line feeding your washing machine.

4. Is it safe to use and flush my toilet on my scheduled flushing day?

It is generally safe to use and flush your toilet during daytime flushing, even on your scheduled flushing day. If you flush your toilet and see discolored water, continue to use and flush your toilet throughout the day as needed. Once the water settles in the main (which may take some time), you will eventually draw clear water into your household plumbing again, and the discolored water will clear from your toilet.

5. What if I did laundry and the discolored water stained my clothes?

Do not dry the clothes or they will become permanently stained when dried.

When your water clears (refer to Question 3), re-wash your clothes using the rust remover (available from most stores) - there are instructions on the packet or bottle.

6. What if I pulled discolored water into my hot water tank?

If you are using hot water and see that it is discolored, we recommend that you stop using the water at that time. Following the steps described under Question 3, continue to check for discolored water using a cold-water spigot until you see that the water has cleared. At this point, you have a couple of different options.

First, if you use hot water and see that it is still discolored, you can wait until the sediment settles in your tank (wait for a couple of hours if possible) before you check the hot water again. The sediment in the discolored water will eventually settle to the bottom of the tank. Please note that if you continue to use the hot water even though it is discolored, it will only keep the sediment stirred in the tank rather than allowing it to settle. The sediment can be removed later on by flushing your hot water tank (it is recommended that a hot water tank be flushed annually). If you do not know how to properly flush your hot water tank, you can hire a professional to help you in this process.

The second option is to flush your hot water tank the day that the discolored water is drawn into the tank. This would need to be completed only after you ensure that the water coming from a cold-water spigot in your home is clear; you would not want to re-fill your tank with discolored water if the water has not yet settled in the water main.

7. Is discolored water safe?

Yes, discolored water is safe to drink and to use, just displeasing to see. The water is treated with chlorine which keeps the water safe and remains in the water even if discolored.

8. What if I do not want to drink or cook using discolored water, even if it is safe?

We recommend that you store some water a day or so ahead of time so that you have some available for drinking and cooking during your scheduled flushing time.

9. Why does the Sherman Water Department flush their water mains?

Our water distribution system is older and over time (and general use) a build-up of sediment and minerals naturally occurs in the water which settles in the pipes.

The Water Department performs hydrant flushing twice a year to clean out the rust and sediment from the pipes. This allows for greater water flow through the pipes and allows the flushing operators to perform valve and hydrant inspections for fire protection.

10. Why haven't other places where I have lived flush water mains?

Flushing is performed nationally. An alternative to flushing that other places may use is to add chemicals (orthophosphates) to the water; the chemicals line the pipes and prevent rust from forming and accumulating in the pipes.

The Sherman Department of Water, however, decided not to add these chemicals to our water because they may change the taste and feel of the water.

11. Why does the Water Department flush during the daytime?

We flush during the daytime primarily because of increased visibility and safety. Better visibility during the day allows operators to more effectively monitor the clarity of the water flowing from the hydrant and track the flow of the water in an effort to avoid property damage.

Also, operators can see and be seen better during the day which is safer for all of those involved.

12. My area was just flushed and I am experiencing low pressure or volume from my faucet, why?

Did you use water during your scheduled flushing time and was the water discolored? If so, the sediment in the discolored water may have clogged the screen (or aerator) in the faucet and it needs to be cleared.

Any other questions please contact our Water Superintendent, Doug Crane, on (716) 269-9096 for assistance.