



City of St. Helena

Hydrant Flushing and Waterline Maintenance

The City's annual water main flushing program will be occurring over the next couple of months. Water Division crews will be out a few days each week running water through hydrants in order to flush out accumulated sediment and mineral deposits. This process is part of a routine maintenance program, and it is necessary to maintain the integrity of the water system and allow the City to continue to deliver safe drinking water to our customers.

As a result of the line flushing process, residents in the immediate vicinity of the work may experience temporary discoloration of their water. This discoloration is caused by iron, manganese, and other mineral deposits being dislodged from the pipes. If you experience discoloration in your water after crews have been flushing in your neighborhood, clear the pipes in your home by running all water faucets for a few minutes.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why does the City flush water mains (pipes)?

A: Flushing is performed in order to maintain water quality and maintain adequate pressures and volumes for fire flow. During this process water is run from hydrants at a high speed, this flow of water is needed to remove any sediment build up and scour the inside of pipes. The valves and hydrants are also inspected to ensure proper operation.

The city's water distribution system is a complex network of pipes and storage reservoirs where sediment or deposits may naturally accumulate over time. If not removed, these materials may cause water quality deterioration, taste and odor problems, or discoloration of the water.

Q. When does flushing normal occur?

A. Normally, flushing takes place for approximately two months beginning in late winter and can go into early spring. In an effort to cause fewer disturbances to our customers, water crews flush the lines from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Q. What should I do when I see city crews flushing hydrants in my area?

A. If you see a city crew flushing hydrants, PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY, as to avoid excess splashing and respect the safety of City workers and other motorists.

It is advised that you refrain from using water while the hydrants in your neighborhood are being flushed. If you attempt to use water while hydrants are being flushed in your area you may experience low water pressure and/or discolored water.

Q. What should I do after the flushing?

A. If you encounter discolored water, you will need to flush your water system. Open the cold water tap nearest to the meter and allow it to run at full flow until the water runs clear. This may take several minutes. The discolored water can stain clothing and other porous materials, so it is advised that you make sure your water is clear in all faucets before using the water. In an effort to conserve water, the City is requesting that you only flush your water pipes if needed.

If you are flushing water at your home we encourage you to utilize the water for landscaping.

Q: Could the flushing water be saved in tanks or spread on lawns?

A: During flushing, water valves are closed to direct the water through designated parts of our main lines and flushed out of opened hydrants at a high velocity. If released on the ground, that water would destroy lawns, trample plants, and erode bare soils. City staff and water utilities throughout California are continually evaluating ways to minimize the amount of water used by flushing. While there are some pilot projects and private companies dedicated to reducing or recycling the amount of water there is no generally accepted method in the State to capture or recycle water used by flushing.

If you are flushing water at your home we encourage you to utilize the water for landscaping.

Q. Why does the water look funny after hydrant flushing?

A. When a hydrant is opened, there will always be temporary incidences of discolored water containing fine sediment particles. This discoloration is caused by iron, manganese, and other mineral deposits being dislodged from the pipes.

If the discoloration persists for more than twenty-four (24) hours, please contact our Chief Water Treatment Plant Operator at (707) 967-2875.

Q. What should I do if my water pressure or volume seems low after flushing?

A. Check your faucet and washer aerators/screens for trapped debris.

Q: How much water is used in the flushing program?

A: Flushing uses about 1% of our annual community water use. That is significantly less than the 21% average reduction that our community has achieved this year! No more water is used than is absolutely necessary. Once the water runs clear, the flow is stopped.

We appreciate your concern for water conservation and ask you to say “Hi” to our field crews who are flushing the mains - they work hard to produce this water and don’t like it going down storm drains either. **Thank you!**