

Water Main Flushing – Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you flushing the water mains?

We clean water mains to improve water quality by removing sediment. Water travels slowly through the mains, causing sediment to settle at the bottom and build up over time. A change in direction or rate of flow of the water in the mains (e.g., due to water main breaks, or hydrant use for firefighting) can disturb the sediment and discolour the water.

How do you clean the Water mains?

We flush most of the water mains by forcing water through them at a high speed and discharging it through hydrants. This water flow scours and cleans sediment from inside the mains. We leave the hydrant open until the water runs clear.

Will I notice anything different after you have flushed the water mains?

Your water may be discoloured. Water is sometimes discoloured after water main cleaning, but this should not last long.

- Turn on a cold water tap and let the water run for a few minutes. Do not choose a tap that has a water filter connected to it, otherwise, 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 coloured cup or container to see if it is clear. You can use your water if it is clear.
- If the water doesn't clear in 5 minutes, wait two hours and try again.

What should I do if the water is still discoloured after two or three hours?

If this happens, call the municipal office at 377-5726 or OCWA at 377-4486 8:30am-4:30pm.

What if someone drinks the water when it is discoloured?

Drinking discoloured water should not make you sick; however, it may not smell, taste, or look pleasant.

What else may I notice about my water after you have flushed the water mains?

Immediately after the cleaning you may notice that your water is cloudy or has a chlorine smell.

- Cloudy water - water is cloudy when air gets in it and makes tiny bubbles. These bubbles are harmless and will disappear if you let the water sit for a few minutes.
- Chlorine smell - we add enough chlorine to the water to keep it safe. You can easily get rid of the chlorine taste and smell by filling a container with water and keeping it in the fridge for drinking-much of the chlorine will leave the water overnight.

How will you monitor the water quality during the flushing program?

OCWA staff will randomly collect samples and test water quality from hydrants, homes, and businesses during the flushing program.

Why can't you flush the water mains at night?

It is safer for staff to work on the streets in daylight. Also, it is easier in the daylight to see when all the sediment has been flushed out and the water is running clear.

Is flushing a normal procedure?

Many cities have some type of flushing program to clean their watermains. This is considered the best way to improve water quality and increase the reliability of the distribution system.