

RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO WATER MAIN FLUSHING



Each year, the Ipswich Water Department conducts a town-wide Water Main Flushing Program to improve drinking water quality and service. Water mains are flushed by releasing water from selected hydrants throughout the town. The purpose of this Guide is to provide residents with information on the flushing process to help them understand and minimize potential short-term adverse impacts from this critical work. For questions regarding the Flushing Program, please contact the Ipswich Utilities Office at (978) 356-6635.

What is “flushing” and why is it important?

Water main flushing (also known as hydrant flushing) is a routine maintenance process that involves systematically turning on various hydrants to allow water to flow at a high velocity through water pipes beneath the roadway. Similar to pressure washing, the fast-moving water scours the inside of the pipes and removes sediment and other buildup that slowly accumulates at the bottom of water pipes over time.

Water main flushing is important for several reasons:

- Enhances long-term water quality by removing sediment and other buildup from the water system
- Helps determine adequate fire flows
- Identifies potential malfunctions in hydrants and system valves
- Isolates weaknesses in the water distribution system that require further attention

How will I know when water mains are being flushed?

The Ipswich Water Department will inform residents at least one week in advance before starting the annual flushing program by posting notices on the Water Department's website, its social media pages, and in the local newspaper. Residents will also be notified 1-2 days before flushing occurs by signs and/or message boards posted in their area. To minimize impacts on residents, flushing typically occurs at night between 8:00 PM and 12:00 AM, and may extend to 4:00 AM in some areas.

Sometimes residents who live beyond the limits of the immediate area where hydrant flushing is being performed may notice short-term impacts such as discolored water or a temporary reduction in water pressure. For this reason, and due to the variable nature of the work, the Ipswich Water Department does not typically provide an advance list of specific streets where flushing will occur. Residents are encouraged to look for signage and monitor their water quality and pressure for the duration of the flushing program.

Will the flushing program affect my property?

There should be no long-term adverse impacts from the flushing program. While the Ipswich Water Department will make every effort to minimize disturbance, water main flushing can cause the following short-term impacts:

- Temporary reductions in water pressure
- Discolored water from increased levels of dissolved iron
- Cloudy water from tiny air bubbles trapped in the pipe

These conditions are not a public health threat and will subside after flushing is complete.

What should I do when hydrants are being flushed in my area?

As a precaution, avoid using the dishwasher, washing machine, and faucets (hot and cold) during flushing activities. Flushing typically occurs at night between 8:00 PM and 12:00 AM, so check your tap by running cold water in the morning. If the water is discolored or cloudy, try running the cold water at full pressure for several minutes (up to 15) until the water runs clear. Check the faucet screens for trapped particles, and consider washing a load or two of dark-colored clothes before washing light-colored clothes. If the water does not run clear after 15 minutes, please contact the Ipswich Utilities Office at (978) 356-6635.



Did you know?

The best way to clear discolored or cloudy water from your tap is to try running the cold water at full pressure for several minutes (up to 15). This removes any discolored water or trapped air that may have entered the pipes in your house, and pulls fresh drinking water from the pipes in the street. As a precaution, avoid running hot water if the cold water is still discolored to prevent discolored water from entering the hot water tank.