

# WATER LINE FLUSHING AND MAINTENANCE



Throughout the year, you may notice Lehigh County Authority (LCA) personnel working on fire hydrants and see water running down the street. Although it may appear to waste water, this is an important preventative maintenance activity we undertake to maintain the integrity of the water system, allowing us to continue to deliver the highest quality water possible to our customers.



The flushing process is done to remove minerals and sediment that naturally accumulate in water mains over the course of the year. Furthermore, this maintenance allows LCA to check and record water pressure to ensure the proper operation of the water system.

We routinely perform this maintenance early in the year, but we will also perform spot maintenance in certain areas of our system as needed to maintain water quality. 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 consists primarily of harmless silt and air and does not affect the safety of the water. If you experience discolored water after crews have been flushing in your neighborhood, clear the pipes in your home by running all cold water faucets for a few minutes.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: Why does the water system need to be routinely flushed?**

A: Lehigh County Authority has a complex network of many miles of pipes and storage facilities 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. Water may also stagnate in lesser used parts of the distribution system. This can result in degraded water quality.

**Q: When does flushing occur?**

A: Normally flushing takes place for approximately a three-month period from early spring to summer.

**Q: What should I do when I see Lehigh County Authority crews flushing in my area?**

A: If you see LCA personnel flushing hydrants, PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY, and watch for workers in or near the roadway. In addition, the roads will be wet, and the water may pond in low lying areas for a short period of time. Inside your home, avoid turning on any faucets or fixtures while crews are flushing the hydrants. This may draw discolored water into your home piping. In particular, avoid washing clothes during the flushing operation. Discolored water may be drawn into the washer and potentially stain clothing.

**Q: How will flushing affect my water?**

A: During the actual flushing process, water customers may experience some disturbance in their usual water service such as short-term decrease in water pressure or discolored water. Although the water does not pose a health risk, it is recommended to avoid drinking the water until it runs clear at the tap. Do not wash clothes if the water is discolored.

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

A: Check faucets and washer screens for trapped debris.

**Q: Why does the water look funny or “dirty” after hydrant flushing?**

A: When a hydrant is opened, there will always be temporary incidences of discolored water containing fine sediment particles making the water appear brown or rust colored. In addition, fine air bubbles may be introduced into the water giving it a milky appearance. There is no health hazard associated with discolored water. Allow a few hours for discoloration to dissipate. To verify the water has settled, allow your cold water tap to run a few minutes. If the discoloration persists for more than six (6) hours, please contact Lehigh County Authority.

**Q: What is the sediment in the water system and how does it get there?**

A: Water naturally contains minerals which react with the inside of the pipe, producing the by-product. This chemical reaction between the pipe and water is a normal and natural process. This process can occur on the inside of the pipe and prevent an adequate volume of water flow. The flushing process removes much of this by-product.

**Q: Doesn't hydrant flushing waste water?**

A: While it may appear wasteful, flushing is the most effective way to keep our drinking water safe, clean and pleasant tasting. Crews conducting the flushing keep careful records of the amount of water that is flushed through the lines. Therefore, this water is accounted for and tracked along with other uses of water.

**If you have other questions about hydrant flushing not covered here, contact our Customer Care Team!**