

FAQ'S: Unidirectional Flushing Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON WESTON MUNICIPAL UTILITIES' UNI-DIRECTIONAL FLUSHING OF WATER MAINS

Q. What is 'unidirectional flushing'?

A. Unidirectional flushing is a maintenance procedure used to scour, clean, and improve the quality of water supplied to our customers.

The water distribution system is set up in a grid-like pattern which allows water to be fed from several directions at the same time. When performing unidirectional flushing, Utility staff open and close pre-determined valves in order to isolate a specific section of water main. Staff will then flush this section of main by opening a specifically-selected fire hydrant, or hydrants, that will draw water through the now-isolated section of water main. Since the water main is isolated and is only being fed from one direction (hence the term 'uni-directional'), the speed of the water flowing through the isolated section of main is greatly increased, producing a scouring effect. The scouring effect removes any potential sediment build-up and cleans the water main.

Test samples are collected from the water as it exits the flowing hydrant. The samples are then immediately tested to determine the turbidity (clarity) of the water. The duration of each unidirectional flushing sequence is determined by the turbidity of these tests. Once the test samples show that the turbidity is at or below the targeted level, the hydrant will be closed and the process is complete for that water main.

Q. How will I know when unidirectional flushing will be taking place in my neighborhood?

A. We have mailed notification postcards to all customers we serve. We have also made a map available showing the areas we will be flushing and the expected sequence we will be performing the unidirectional flushing program. Information on our progress and can be viewed on the map located on the home page at, <http://westonwi.gov/>

Each morning, our crews will place notification signs in the terraces of commonly traveled streets in the vicinity of where flushing will be taking place that day. If you see these signs in your neighborhood please check our website, we may be nearing your location soon.

Please be aware there is no way we can determine an exact date/time we will be on your street. Please regularly check our website for updates regarding the progress of our flushing program.



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Q. I am a water-sensitive customer. How can I make sure my service is uninterrupted?

A. We realize some of our customers are water-sensitive for a variety of reasons (businesses, medical concerns, etc.). Although we strive to provide continuous service to our customers, there may be brief durations of low water pressure for customers adjacent to where we are performing the unidirectional flushing. If you have concerns about maintaining continuous water service, please contact us at 715.359.2876. We cannot guarantee uninterrupted service but we can coordinate with you directly to keep any interruptions to a minimum.

Q. What should I expect when unidirectional flushing is happening in my neighborhood?

A. Unidirectional flushing will have a minimal impact to the majority of our customers. Customers in the immediate vicinity of where flushing is taking place may experience a temporary drop in water pressure. If this does occur, please be aware that Utility staff is diligently working to minimize any inconvenience caused to you by our flushing process.

Flushing typically occurs Monday through Friday between 7:30 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Q. How long does it take to flush each water main?

A. Since this is a revision of our previous water system flushing operation, the time it takes to flush each area is unknown. In previous years, the time has ranged from 20 minutes to an hour or possibly longer and is dependent on a variety of factors. Factors include the age of the water main, type of pipe, length/diameter of the water main being flushed, and if any sediment buildup is present.

The time is ultimately determined by the turbidity (clarity) of the water being flushed. Test samples are collected from the water as it exits the flowing hydrant. The samples are immediately tested to determine turbidity of the water. Once the test samples show the turbidity is at or below the targeted level, the hydrant will be closed and the process is complete in that particular location.



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Q. Can I use my water when flushing is taking place?

A. If possible, do not use your water while flushing is happening. If you must, first run cold water, until it is clear, to remove any particles from your system. If you use water while we are flushing you may notice discolored water from mineral particles and sediment that may have accumulated over time in the water main. You may also experience low water pressure while we are flushing. Your pressure will return to normal once our flushing has ended. In addition, we advise running your cold water for a few minutes after the flushing in your neighborhood is completed.

Q. How is unidirectional flushing different from previous year's flushing?

A. Unidirectional flushing involves directing flow to specific water mains to assure that the water reaches a velocity of 5 feet per second inside the water mains. Research has shown this is the velocity necessary to achieve proper cleaning of pipes. The process is more time consuming than previous efforts because it involves operating more water valves and monitoring and testing for proper flow and water quality improvements.

Q. Isn't this a wasteful practice that costs more?

A. A recently completed water quality evaluation for the water utility recommends uni-directional flushing as a best practice to keep the system as clean as possible. Unfortunately, the only way to accomplish this is to flush mains to the local drainage systems, ultimately reaching the Wisconsin River. The expectation is that as the system is more effectively cleaned, the frequency of cleaning can be decreased to once per year instead of twice, as in the past.

Funds from the Utility rates pay for this program, just like any other maintenance program we have. The water used for flushing is then paid for through water rates since it is factored in as non-revenue water in maintenance expenses. The water volume used for uni-directional flushing is expected to be less overall than with past flushing efforts.

Q. Who do I call with additional questions?

A. You may call us at 715.359.2876 with any questions.



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