

# What's on Tap

News for Customers of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (WASA)

November 2007

## Upgrades to the District water distribution system continue

Everyday, WASA delivers 135 million gallons of drinking water to residents, businesses and institutions in the District of Columbia through a 1,300-mile network beneath the city streets. In addition to this complicated maze of water pipes, ranging from four to 78 inches in diameter, the system includes 36,000 valves, four pumping stations, more than 9,000 hydrants, and eight storage facilities.

Like water systems in many older East Coast cities, the District's was installed before World War II, and some pipes are more than 100 years old. In the short

11-year history of WASA's existence, more than \$300 million has been spent on numerous water main, pump station, and reservoir upgrades to address problems due to age and decades of inattention. In addition to city-wide lead service line



WASA is replacing old, inoperable valves throughout the District.

replacement, WASA is also undertaking extensive system upgrades in areas east of the Anacostia to enhance water quality and improve pressure. These projects and many more are a part of WASA's Water Facilities Plan, which systematically identifies needed rehabilitation and

replacement of parts of the system, along with a timetable and costs.

Recently, system reliability and public safety have been areas of public concern. In response, WASA is reviewing the current schedule and budget for water main replacements, particularly in the older, more densely populated areas of the city. At the same time, WASA and the

District fire department are working together to ensure regularly scheduled fire hydrant inspections. WASA has undertaken a Hydrant Upgrade Program to replace 3,000 fire hydrants over the next five years. The cost of this program and other water system upgrades is included in the rates customers are charged for service.

## Water emergencies? Call WASA first

If you have not been notified by WASA about a scheduled water shut-off and you do not have water or your water pressure has suddenly dropped, please call the WASA 24-hour, 7 day-a-week Emergency Hotline at (202) 612-3400 or Customer Service at (202) 354-3600. The sooner we know about a problem, the sooner we can send out a crew to fix it.

WASA notifies customers 24 to 48 hours before planned water shut-offs with door hangers, but in an emergency, advanced notification is not possible. Emergencies can be caused by many things such as a break in a pipe, a hydrant being knocked over in an auto accident, or private contractors accidentally hitting and breaking a water line.

## WASA's Interactive Voice Recognition system serves customers 24/7

WASA's customer services are available around the clock. With its Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system, you can perform many self-service options through voice communications, including bill payment, water usage information, payment extensions, and other services 24 hours a day. You can

navigate the IVR system by speaking into your telephone when prompted. To access the system, call Customer Service at (202) 354-3600.

Using this technology, you can also find out about ongoing construction work or get water outage information by entering your zip code. For example, if you dial into the IVR system to report an

emergency, you will be prompted to enter your zip code. If there are no active work zones, you will be transferred immediately to the Command Center. If there is an active work zone in your



area, then you will hear the information for that particular work zone.

Outage information and locations of ongoing construction work are also posted on the WASA website, [www.dcwasa.com](http://www.dcwasa.com).

## To flush or not to flush: Disposing of unused medications

**C**an unused or expired prescription drugs be flushed down the toilet? This is a question WASA often hears from customers.



To protect our water quality, you should not dispose of any unwanted or unused medications in the toilet or drains. Here are some tips, based on recently issued federal government guidelines, for the correct disposal of medicines.

- Most prescription drugs should be thrown in the trash. Be sure and take them out of their original containers or remove your name or any other identifying information from the packaging.
- Mix prescription drugs with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter, and put them in impermeable, non-descript containers, such as empty cans and then place them in plastic sealable bags. This will ensure that no one else will take them if found.
- Flush prescription drugs down the toilet **only** if the label or accompanying patient information specifically instructs doing so. This is limited to small amounts of liquid syrups. If the label says to contact your local municipal authority, then **do not** flush the drugs down the toilet or sink.
- Check with your pharmacy or health care provider to see if they have a "drug take back" disposal program. Again, remember to remove any personal information from the packaging before returning your prescriptions.

## Thinking about working at WASA?

**I**f you are interested in employment opportunities at WASA, visit [www.dcwasa.com](http://www.dcwasa.com) and click on "Jobs" at the top of the page. WASA is an Equal Opportunity



Employer and actively promotes a diverse and drug-free workplace. You

can also call our job line at (202) 787-4000 for vacancy listings.

## Autumn leaves can be dangerous

**T**he colors of autumn leaves delight us, but wet leaves on sidewalks can be slippery and dangerous.

The District's Department of Public Works (DPW) rakes and vacuums between 8,000 and 10,000 tons of leaves from sidewalks, streets and tree boxes each fall. Crews visit each street two times during leaf season. You can visit the DPW website [www.dpw.dc.gov](http://www.dpw.dc.gov) to see the pick-up schedule in your neighborhood.

Here are some tips for dealing with your leaves

this fall:

- Do not rake leaves into the street or storm sewers; leaves clogging the storm sewers can cause flooding and sewer backups.



cause flooding and sewer backups.

- Keep your sidewalks clear of wet leaves.

- Don't park your car on piles of dry leaves

because the heat of a car's catalytic converter can start a fire.

- Leaves used as mulch help to conserve moisture, moderate soil temperatures, reduce weeds and reduce soil erosion around plants.

## WASA's SPLASH program offers customers assistance

**T**hrough WASA's SPLASH (Serving People by Lending a Supporting Hand) program, District customers experiencing temporary financial hardship can receive assistance with paying their water and sewer bills. SPLASH is funded solely by contributions from customers and the community. Over the last two years, SPLASH contributions have totaled \$144,384. Customers can contribute to the program by checking the appropriate box on their WASA bill or by calling Customer Service at (202) 354-3600. This year, the Greater Washington Urban League assumed the role of SPLASH program administrator, previously held by the Salvation Army.

*For more information, visit WASA's website at [www.dcwasa.com](http://www.dcwasa.com).*

*Para informar emergencias del agua residuales, llama (202) 612-3400.*

**Report Emergencies 24 Hours a day!**

*To report improper use of hydrants, clogged catch basins, water main leaks, or suspected sewer backups, call (202) 612-3400.*

*To reach WASA's Lead Services Line, call (202) 787-2732.*



District of Columbia  
Water and Sewer  
Authority

Customer Service  
Department  
810 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 354-3600  
[www.dcwasa.com](http://www.dcwasa.com)