

## General Manager's Message: Out in the Cold



Dear Customers,

I hope you had a terrific holiday season. For me, the holidays are always a time of good cheer, generosity, and perhaps spending some time away from work with family and friends.

But for a number of our dedicated employees, the holidays can also be a time of standing for hours, in the dark, in freezing water several inches deep. These are the

members of Team Blue who fix water main breaks, which are common this time of year. DC Water averages about 400 breaks a year, with most happening when the weather is cold.

We have multiple crews from multiple departments on standby to address broken mains quickly, but we can't be everywhere at once. Our first reports of trouble often come from customers like you.

If you see water somewhere it shouldn't be, like bubbling up in the middle of a road or sidewalk, please call us at (202) 612-3400, send a tweet to @dcwater or visit [dcwater.com](http://dcwater.com) on your mobile phone to report it. Water can freeze when it hits a paved surface, causing a danger for pedestrians and drivers. With your help, we'll continue to keep the water running and the streets safe this winter.

George S. Hawkins  
[gmsuggestions@dcwater.com](mailto:gmsuggestions@dcwater.com)

## Did You Know?

The U.S. Geological Survey studied the Potomac River and released data in 2010 showing that nitrogen loads to the Potomac River from wastewater treatment plants has been cut almost in half since 1985, while submerged aquatic vegetation, a positive indicator of river health, has increased.



Nature Magazine's Richard A. Lovett noted that "efforts to clean up the Potomac River have markedly improved conditions for fish and waterfowl, reported a study in the Proceedings

see **DID YOU KNOW?** continued on back

## Selected DC Water Achievements in 2011

In 2011, DC Water continued its global leadership in water sector science and technology. The Authority's 1,100-strong workforce made significant strides in environmental protection, customer service and regulatory compliance.

• **Three major groundbreakings.**

Enhanced Nutrient Removal will protect the Chesapeake Bay and help DC Water meet its 2014 permit requirements. Digesters will generate clean, renewable energy to operate the Blue Plains Advanced



Wastewater Treatment Plant while producing fewer and cleaner biosolids. The Clean Rivers Project is the District's largest construction project in a generation, building Metro-sized tunnels to keep billions of gallons of pollution out of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and Rock Creek.

• **An award-winning year.** The agency and the staff won numerous awards, including:

- o 2011 Platinum Peak Performance Award (National Association of Clean Water Agencies)
- o 2011 Environmental

- Leadership Award (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)
- o 2011 George Bradley Gascoigne Medal for Operational Problem Solving and Improvement (Water Environment Federation)
- o 2011 Ed Malemezian Utility Professional Best

- Practices Award (Utilimetrics)
- o 2011 CIO 100 Award (CIO Magazine)
- o Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (Government Finance Officers Association)

- o 2011 Hermes Creative Award (Hermes Awards)
- **Serving customers better.** DC Water upgraded the technology in its customer service office and in the field, including a new call recording system to better evaluate the quality of service. The Authority is also working with Itron, a meter technology company, to use sound wave technology to better detect leaks along water distribution mains.
- **Reaching out.** The Authority continued to connect with its customers in new and innovative ways, including

see **ACHIEVEMENTS** continued on back

## In an Emergency...

Though water emergencies are rare, there can be instances when special precautions should be taken. DC Water has experienced experts in emergency management and water quality on staff. In the event of an emergency, DC Water communicates with customers by reaching out to the media, posting information on the homepage, and contacting government agencies like the U.S. EPA and the CDC, as well as elected officials. In a short amount of time, the Authority makes a mass notification.



DC Water also provides customer information on water emergencies, such as what to do during a boil water advisory, on the website at: [dcwater.com/education/sudden\\_emergencies.cfm](http://dcwater.com/education/sudden_emergencies.cfm). Bookmark the page on your web browser today to reference when you need it.

If there is an emergency and you have concerns about drinking water, please visit the website, pay attention to the media or call the 24-hour emergency line at (202) 612-3400.

## GM Hawkins Cuts Ribbon at Waterfront Park

George Hawkins joined various dignitaries and several Presidents on November 22 to cut the ribbon on a new bridge connecting Diamond Teague Park and the Yards Park in Southwest. The bridge runs past DC Water's historic Main Pumping Station along the waterfront. DC Water supported the effort to provide historical and environmental information



about the buildings and area included on giant informational panels.

## Achievements *continued*

standing-room-only town hall meetings, steady growth of the @dcwater Twitter feed, innovative marketing of tap water and aggressive outreach to national and local media.

- **Lending a helping hand.** More than 6,000 low-income customers received nearly \$1.5 million toward their water bills through DC Water's two customer assistance programs.

## Cold Weather and Cloudy Water

During cold weather, air bubbles can form in your pipes and cause tap water to appear cloudy. Naturally, cold water holds more air than warmer water. When water travels from the pipes in the street and into your household pipes, air bubbles escape and cause the water to temporarily appear cloudy



or milky. If you experience cloudy water, simply run the tap water into a clear container and observe for a few minutes. The water will eventually clear from the bottom to the top as the air bubbles escape. If you have questions, contact the Drinking Water Division at (202) 612-3440 or [drinkingwater@dcwater.com](mailto:drinkingwater@dcwater.com).

## Thawing Frozen Pipes in the Home

If you find you have a frozen pipe, you should immediately take steps to thaw the pipe to keep it from bursting.

First, locate and shut off the main water supply valve in case a pipe has broken. Next, open the faucet so that water will flow through the pipe once the area is melted. This will help melt more ice. Then, apply heat to or around the pipe. Keep all sources of heat away from flammable materials and do not use any open flame devices. Also, do not use devices that will cause the melted ice to boil, as that can



also cause pipes to break.

Call a licensed plumber if you cannot locate the frozen section, you are unable to

reach it, or you are unable to thaw it. Check for other frozen pipes in your home or business, especially those pipes that are located along an exterior wall or bring the water into the building at the foundation.

For emergency service inside your home, contact a licensed plumber. Call the DC Water 24-hour emergency line at (202) 612-3400 for water emergencies on public property.

## Did You Know? *continued*

of the National Academy of Sciences." The article also quotes William Ball, an environmental engineer at Johns Hopkins University, saying, "Because much of the nitrogen decrease in

the Potomac has been due to advanced wastewater treatment, this study is a strong validation of the importance of applying this technology worldwide."