

WHAT'S ON

dc
water is life

TAP?

NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS | VOL. 13 ISSUE 10

General Manager's Message: Making a SPLASH



Dear Customers,

I hope this holiday season finds you well. This time of year brings colder weather and shorter days, but also the pressure of spreading household resources thinner.

Some of our customers need your help.

DC Water has two programs to help low-income residents in the District. We call our emergency assistance program SPLASH for short. It makes the difference for dozens of customers each year who are about to lose their service because they can't afford to pay the bill.

This year, for the first time, DC Water employees will have the chance to donate to SPLASH through a deduction on their paychecks. I am encouraging every member of our team, and our Board, to pitch in on a regular basis – even with a nominal donation.

I hope you will join them. You can make a tax-deductible SPLASH donation by rounding your bill up to the nearest \$1 or \$2, by sending a separate check with your payment, or by visiting razoo.com/splash online.



George S. Hawkins
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Keep Coal Tar out of our Ecosystem

Coal tar is used in pavement products and is highly toxic, known to have harmful impacts on humans and animals and is suspected to cause cancer. Concentrations of toxic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in coal-tar-based pavement sealants are about 1,000 times higher than in alternative asphalt-based products.

see **COAL TAR** continued on back

Water Main Breaks in the District

As the weather turns cold, we experience more water main breaks. This is due to the expansion and contraction of the pipe material, weakening the water mains. Pipe corrosion, soil conditions, age and ground movement can also cause a water main break, creating unexpected problems for customers and motorists.

DC Water averages about 400 water main breaks per year and most occur in the winter months. For this reason, the Authority schedules more stand-by crews in the winter months and in recent years has cross-trained sewer repair workers to also make water main repairs.

Water main repairs are prioritized based on several factors such as severity of the break, impact to customers and the environment, potential damage to public and private property, and unsafe traffic conditions due to street flooding. Emergency water main breaks can cause widespread service disruptions and are considered critical repairs by DC Water crews.



Photo courtesy of USEPA

DC Water's newest Wendy the Water Drop video on **YouTube** explains the steps involved in repairing a water main break. It can be viewed at: bit.ly/mainbreaks.

Anyone observing tap water running from streets or sidewalks is encouraged to report the leak for a crew to inspect. To do this, call DC Water's 24-hour Command Center at (202) 612-3400, or report it on the website dcwater.com or tweet [@dcwater](https://twitter.com/dcwater) with a picture and location. Please provide specific information about the location and appearance of the break when reporting a water emergency. For listings of current repairs, please visit the website and click the "Current Workzones" link.

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 into your household pipes, air bubbles escape at your taps and cause

the water to temporarily appear cloudy or milky. This is not a health concern.

If you experience cloudy water, simply run the tap water into a clear container and wait 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.

Coal Tar *continued*

Since 2009, it has been illegal to sell, use, or permit the use of coal-tar pavement products on District property, subject to a daily fine of \$2,500. Please do not use, or allow others to use, coal-tar-based sealant on your parking lot, driveway, etc. Contractors and distributors should provide a Material Safety Data Sheet that lists product ingredients or components. Do not use products with ingredients that include the words “coal,” “tar,” “refined coal tar pitch,” or “RT-12.”

- You can demand the use of a much less toxic asphalt-based sealer instead of coal-tar-based products. Don't allow a mixed product containing both coal tar and asphalt to be used.

For new projects, consider using porous concrete.

- Homeowners may DISPOSE of unused sealant products at District Household Hazardous Waste Disposal sites.

Help protect the health of waterways, marine life, animals and people by knowing what's in your pavement products. For more information please contact Kate Judson at the District Department of the Environment, at kate.judson@dc.gov or (202) 407-1277.



Photo courtesy of DDOE

Water and the Environment: Education through Tours, Speaker's Bureau and Website

Want to learn more about water and the environment? DC Water offers several ways. You can take a tour of the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant. It's the world's largest facility of its kind and more than a thousand people tour it each year. Local, regional and international visitors come

to Blue Plains to learn how wastewater from the sewer system is treated and cleaned through a series of steps and ultimately recycled and returned to the Potomac River.

Public tours are held on Thursday mornings throughout the year. Middle and high schools can schedule class trips on Wednesdays, for grades 6 and up. The minimum age of all visitors is 12 years old, and individuals 18 and older must present a valid, government-issued ID to enter the facility.

All tours are scheduled on a first-come, first-served

basis. If you wish to visit Blue Plains, please submit your request at least two weeks in advance by visiting dcwater.com/about/tours.cfm and completing the tour request form. You may also call the number below.

If you can't come to DC Water, the Authority may be able to come to you.



DC Water staffs a wide range of experts on its Speaker's Bureau to offer presentations to neighborhood associations, schools, business and civic organizations,

community groups and religious institutions. Groups of 10 or more can request a speaker at dcwater.com, by clicking on *Customer Services and Outreach* and selecting **Speakers Bureau** or by calling the number below.

Finally, the website, at dcwater.com, offers information on the Authority's programs and services, construction projects and the environment. If you can't find your answers there, please call (202) 787-2200.