

# WHAT'S ON TAP



NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS • VOLUME 18 ISSUE 8



## Planning is first step in emergency preparedness

Emergencies occur every day—and whether it is a burst pipe affecting a single family, a water main break impacting a street, or a severe weather event affecting an entire region, there are steps that you can take now to better prepare.

DC Water's Office of Emergency Management prepares for emergencies in various ways:

- **Creating Emergency Response Plans and Public Notification Plans**
- **Scheduling and creating training exercises**
- **Providing technology and support vehicles**
- **Developing relationships with other agencies and the critical response community**

The Office of Emergency Management also coordinates responses bringing together personnel from many departments.

DC Water has a seat in the District's Emergency Operations Center – a physical location that brings together representatives from District agencies, utilities and other public services in one large operations center to manage large-scale event responses. DC Water also has a 24-hour Emergency Command Center that responds to customer emergencies and tracks the operations personnel in the field. This is the hub of communications, and its staff works with DC Water's technical experts in drinking water, infrastructure, management and communication.

If there is a DC Water incident that necessitates action by customers, the organization will communicate via all communication channels, including traditional media, social media, alert systems (for those who sign up) and sometimes with door-to-door notification or robocalls by phone. If you have a water or sewer emergency, please call the 24-hour Command Center at **202-612-3400**.

Please read this important issue of **What's on Tap** to find out how to locate your shut off valve, what to do in a drinking water shortage or outage and how to sign up for emergency alerts.

Make plans now for your family's safety. Plan for your family's communication or evacuation strategy using tools available at [ready.gov/publications](http://ready.gov/publications).

## General Manager's Message

Dear Customers:

It seems every year we experience extreme weather events across the country and here at home.

Some emergencies occur with little to no warning. Other times, we have hours or days to prepare. As DC Water observes Preparedness Month this September, have once again created a special double issue of **What's on Tap**. It gives an inside look at ways our organization trains and prepares for emergencies and provides valuable information for customers and residents on what to do in an emergency.



In the past year, DC Water hosted a two-day training event to introduce our next generation of emergency responders to the Incident Command System and DC Water's capabilities. DC Water's functional departments continued practicing relocation efforts by enacting each department's Continuity of Operations Plan. We are also in the process of becoming the nation's first water utility to become accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program.

Please remember that during an emergency, DC Water's Office of External Affairs, Command Center and Customer Service departments work together and through all viable channels to keep customers and the public informed. Please read this issue to become better prepared should you find yourself in a water or sewer emergency.

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# It's a disaster. What can you do?

## Hurricane/Flooding

### Potential water/sewer impacts:

- A hurricane could damage or destroy drinking water infrastructure, causing water outages or unsafe drinking water.
- A hurricane could damage or destroy sewer infrastructure, causing leaks or spills of sewage.
- High winds and heavy rainfall can cause blockages to stormdrains or rip loose gutters and downspouts, causing flooding.

### What you can do:

- Store enough drinking water for at least 72 hours for everyone in the home, including pets.
- Fill your bathtub with water for flushing toilets, bathing and washing dishes.
- Secure loose rain gutters and downspouts and clear any clogged areas or debris to prevent water damage to your property.
- After the storm, be mindful of standing water. Not only could it be electrically charged, it could also contain pathogens.
- Follow instructions from the water authority about the safety of your drinking water and whether you need to take any precautions.
- Call the 24-hour Command Center at **202-612-3400** for water and sewer emergencies.
- More information on hurricanes: [ready.gov/hurricanes-emergencies](http://ready.gov/hurricanes-emergencies).

## Snowstorm

### Potential water/sewer impacts:

- Fire hydrants can be buried in snow so that firefighters cannot find them in an emergency.
- Vehicles or plowed snow could block hydrants.
- Storm drains could become blocked by snow or debris, so that melting snow first floods the streets and sidewalks, then freezes.

### What you can do:

- If deep snow is accumulating, able-bodied volunteers are asked to clear snow away from fire hydrants near their home or business so that firefighter can have ready access in the event of an emergency.
- Make sure the hydrants are not blocked by vehicles or plowed snow.
- Shovel your snow away from storm drains. They need to be kept clear so that melting snow has somewhere to go. Otherwise, flooding, followed by re-freezing can make a bad snowstorm even worse.
- Alert DC Water to any suspected leaks or breaks by calling the 24-hour Command Center at **202-612-3400**.
- More information on snowstorms: [ready.gov/winter-weather](http://ready.gov/winter-weather).

## Large water main break, pressure loss and/or drinking water contamination

### Potential drinking water impacts:

- A large water main break could cause water outages.
- It could also cause a loss of pressure in the drinking water system.
- Anytime the pressure drops to zero, precautionary measures are taken, such as a boil water advisory. Other precautionary measures may be a Do Not Drink order, or a Do Not Use order.
- A contaminant on the Potomac River could cause the drinking water supplier to close the water intakes for a period of time. This would result in a call for water conservation. (See inset)

### Potential traffic impacts:

- If DC Water staff must repair a water main, they must first excavate it. Lane or road closures or sidewalk closures are commonplace when crews are replacing a water main. A smaller pipe, called a service line, may not cause such a disruption.
- Sometimes the utility needs a rare part to complete the fix. In those cases, it may be an extended repair.
- Please check traffic reports and take alternate routes to avoid road closures.

### What you can do:

- Always have stored enough drinking water to last 72 hours for everyone in the home, including pets.
- If the drinking water intakes are closed, there may be a period when customers are asked to stock up on water supplies BEFORE the intakes are closed. In that case:
  - Fill your bathtub with water for flushing toilets, bathing and washing dishes.
  - Fill jugs with water for use during the outages.
- Stay tuned to media outlets and [dcwater.com](http://dcwater.com) to know what measures you are asked to take.
- Information on how to boil water is available at: [dcwater.com/faqboil](http://dcwater.com/faqboil).
- Call the 24-hour Command Center at **202-612-3400** for further instructions.

**Be prepared by reviewing emergency information at [dcwater.com/emergencies](http://dcwater.com/emergencies).**



# How to conserve water in a crisis

Water conservation is key when DC Water needs to preserve its stored water as long as possible. There are various ways for customers to conserve water during an emergency. If you have water service, but are asked to conserve it:

### In the bathroom:

- Turn the tap off while shaving or brushing teeth.
- Showers use less water than baths, but take short showers.
- Flush the toilet less often. In most cases, several uses can be made of the toilet for liquid wastes before flushing is required.

### In the kitchen:

- Plug up the sink or use a wash basin if washing dishes by hand. Better yet, use paper plates and plastic utensils.
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until the water is cool.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator overnight rather than using a running tap of hot water.
- Always use a brush, wash cloth, or your hand to dislodge particles of dirt when washing anything rather than relying on the force of the water to do the job.
- Stock food that doesn't require cooking with water.

### In the laundry room:

- Hold off on doing laundry until the incident is over.

### Outdoor:

- No watering the lawn or landscaping.
- No filling pools, spas or hot tubs.
- No car washing.
- Always use a broom to clean walkways, driveways, decks and porches, rather than hosing off these areas.
- Inspect your outside hoses and spigots to make sure none are leaking or left on.

## How much water do I need to store?



It's an emergency! Numerous scenarios can make your tap water undrinkable or unusable—a severe weather event could damage or destroy water and sewer infrastructure. Or a contaminant coupled with a loss of pressure could cause concern of contamination. Residents should stay alert during a disaster and follow the directions of any drinking water advisories.

Residents should store enough water to last at least three days, and if possible, store enough water to last two weeks. How much do you need to store for drinking, for toilet flushing and for other uses?

### Drinking Water

For drinking, you should store a minimum of one gallon per person and per pet for each day. Keep your water in air-tight containers, at room temperature, and away from direct sunlight. Replace bottled water when it reaches the expiration date, or for non-store bought water, after six months. Use this water for drinking, cooking and brushing of teeth.

### Hygiene

Remember, you likely won't have water to bathe or to wash dishes or do laundry. So, if you know in advance that the water shut-off or restrictions are coming, you can fill your bathtub, washtub, plastic

tubs, large pots and pans and other containers with water to use for toilet flushing or for a quick sponge bath. Those who live in hurricane-prone areas are familiar with the practice of filling their bathtubs with water when a hurricane is projected for landfall.

### Toilet Flushing

When you're in an situation where your water is restricted or shut off, here are some tips to keep your toilet flowing.

- Flush your toilet with a bucket of water. It requires a gallon of water, poured directly into the toilet bowl.
- Start slowly at first, then quickly add the rest of the water into the bowl. The shape of the toilet and the pressure from the water in the bucket pushes everything through the pipes.

- There's no need to use the handle or empty the toilet tank. Save the water in the tank for another day of water restrictions.
- If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down.

### How much water in total do I need?

- **1** gallon for drinking + **2** gallons for hygiene/flushing = **3** gallons per person per day;
- **9** gallons per person for **72** hours; and
- **42** gallons per person for **2** weeks. If necessary, you can use the water in your water heater for toilet flushing.

# Sign up for emergency alerts



Photo provided by EPA

## DC Water Alerts

Sign up for DC Water's alert system to be notified of outages and repairs: [dcwater.com/signup](http://dcwater.com/signup)

Sign up for DC Water news and press releases: [dcwater.com/signup](http://dcwater.com/signup)

## District of Columbia's Government Alerts:

AlertDC is the official District of Columbia communications system that sends alerts, notifications, and updates from public safety officials and the emergency manager. Learn about traffic conditions, government closures, public safety incidents and severe weather. To get started today, visit [hsema.dc.gov/page/alertdc](http://hsema.dc.gov/page/alertdc)

## Critical Customers Database

Does your property protect the public's health or safety? Or protect the environment? Or service a susceptible population in the Authority's service area?

If so, your property may be a candidate for notifications through DC Water's mass notification system, Everbridge. Everbridge allows for multimodal messaging from the Authority to critical customers during an incident.

To be considered for placement in the critical customer database, please complete the online critical customer survey to help determine if your facility qualifies.

# Find your emergency shut-off valve

When there is a water emergency, like a burst pipe or leaking plumbing, you may need to quickly shut off the water supply to your house. Here's how:

- 1 Look for the main valve where the water supply enters your house (usually in the basement) or in a concrete box near the street.
- 2 If the valve is outside your house, lift the cover with a large screwdriver.
- 3 Then, use a pipe or crescent wrench to turn off the water.
- 4 If you must evacuate when the weather is cold, then drain all water from the system, including your hot water heater.
- 5 Find your valve now so you don't have to look for it when you need it. Paint it with fluorescent paint or apply fluorescent tape so you can find it in the dark.



# Sewer back-ups due to flooding

Prepare for flooding by reviewing your insurance coverage. Helpful information can be found at [disb.dc.gov/page/evaluate-your-need-flood-insurance](http://disb.dc.gov/page/evaluate-your-need-flood-insurance) and [disb.dc.gov/page/five-reminders-about-your-insurance-coverage](http://disb.dc.gov/page/five-reminders-about-your-insurance-coverage)

If you have experienced a sewer back-up due to a flooding event you might be eligible to participate in DC Water's floodproofing prevention rebate or backwater valve rebate program. Please visit: [dcwater.com/faqbfp](http://dcwater.com/faqbfp).

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