

# WHAT'S ON TAP



NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS • VOLUME 17 ISSUE 8



## Emergency planning makes a difference

Emergencies occur every day—and whether it is a burst pipe affecting one 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 Mayor'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 report suspicious activity.

Make plans now for your family's safety. Prepare a kit with the contents listed to the right. Plan for your family's communication or evacuation using tools available at [ready.gov/publications](http://ready.gov/publications).



### Basic Emergency Supply Kit

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit (from [ready.gov](http://ready.gov)):

- Water
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation





## GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Dear Customers:



Recent extreme weather events across the country and close to home remind us that some emergencies occur with little to no warning. Other times, we have hours or days to prepare. As we celebrate Preparedness Month this September, DC Water has created a special double issue of **What's on Tap** to remind customers how to prepare for an emergency. It gives an inside look at ways our organization trains and prepares for, and responds to, emergencies.

In the past year, DC Water implemented a full-scale exercise that included 22 representatives from outside agencies to practice the operations and coordination required during a water contamination event. In addition, DC Water's functional departments are each practicing relocation efforts that may be required by utilizing the Continuity of Operations Plan.

Regional partners have stepped up coordination during emergencies and enacted the National Capital Region's WARN system to help locate resources such as pipes, valves and specialized personnel, during local emergency situations.

Please remember that DC Water's Office of External Affairs, Command Center and Customer Service will work together and communicate through numerous 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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# Practice today for success tomorrow

At DC Water, an experienced and trained Incident Management Team (IMT) responds to emergencies. Within an hour of a serious incident, the team is notified and activated. Team members from all operations and support functions are trained, though a partial IMT activation might pull together just a segment of those. Twelve times in the last 12 months, a full IMT or partial team has activated to assist in managing an event or emergency.

DC Water follows the Incident Command System (ICS)— a system familiar to almost all first responders, public safety and health officials, many utilities and governmental agencies such as the CDC, EPA and FEMA. ICS gives a common structure, language and approach to incident management and response.

DC Water's personnel learn this system through in-house training, online certifications, off-site training at facilities such as FEMA's Emergency Management Institute and via on the job experience, beginning with smaller incidents.

Through the years, DC Water's staff have progressed through a series of exercises, beginning with discussion based trainings and advancing to functional exercises. This past year, DC Water activated a full IMT and engaged nine regional partners including water utilities in a full-scale functional exercise that lasted two days and tested the ability to produce a full incident action plan, develop

a communications plan, execute water sampling procedures, coordinate lab testing capabilities and explore in-house hydraulic modeling to enhance response capabilities. A **Washington Post** reporter even embedded in the exercise to better understand the processes for future reporting during an incident and wrote an article to raise awareness of ICS and emergency response.

This exercise was one of 20 trainings and exercises that DC Water facilitated for staff and partner agencies in the past year and the schedule for next year is just as full. The exercise objectives and scenarios are built to assist with solving resilience gaps that have been identified in after action reports following previous trainings, exercises and real life 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 could be a water outage due to a large water main break or pump station failure. Another event that could initiate a conservation advisory could be a contaminant in the water source, such as when a chemical spills into the Potomac River, causing the water supplier to close its intakes on the river.

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.
- Brush your teeth before shaving in the morning so the cold water in the supply line is used instead of being wasted while you wait for hot water with which to shave.
- Use disposable diapers to avoid a toilet flush when rinsing a dirty diaper and to cut down on the amount of soiled laundry to be washed.

### 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.
- Add food wastes to your compost pile instead of using the garbage disposal.
- 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.

- Clean vegetables in a pan filled with water rather than running water from the tap.
- 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.
  - You may want to 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

### 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:

- Look for the main valve where the water supply enters your house (usually in the basement) or in a concrete box near the street.
- If the valve is outside your house, lift the cover with a large screwdriver.
- Then, use a pipe or crescent wrench to turn off the water.
- If you must evacuate when the weather is cold, then drain all water from the system, including your hot water heater.
- 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.

# If you see something, say something



We are all familiar with the campaign to motivate bystanders to report suspicious activity. That applies to the District's water system as well. If you see something unusual, for instance someone hooking up to a fire hydrant, or tampering with a fire hydrant, or behaving oddly around a pump station, report it. You can call 911 or DC Water's 24-hour Command Center at 202-612-3400.

DC Water employs a robust Security force that keeps many buildings secure and can respond to calls of suspicious behavior.

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## Basic Emergency Supply Kit



- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Feminine products
- Local map
- Additional items can be found at [ready.gov](http://ready.gov)

Source: [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1390846764394-dc08e309debe561d866b05ac84daf1ee/checklist\\_2014.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1390846764394-dc08e309debe561d866b05ac84daf1ee/checklist_2014.pdf)



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30941-I-0076