

VILLAGE OF MARSHALL FIRE HYDRANT FLUSHING AND WATERLINE MAINTENANCE

In the spring and fall of each year, you may notice Marshall Utilities' Water Department personnel working on fire hydrants and see water running down the street. Although it may appear to waste water, this is an important preventative maintenance activity we undertake to maintain the integrity of the water system and allow us to continue to deliver the highest quality water possible to our customers. The flushing process is done to remove minerals and sediment that naturally accumulate in water mains over the course of the year.

Furthermore, this maintenance allows us to check and record water pressure to ensure the proper operation of the system. Finally, by operating each and every fire hydrant in our water distribution system, we ensure each one is properly maintained and available for use in the event of a fire. We routinely perform this maintenance during April and October of each year.

As a result of the line flushing process, residents in the immediate vicinity of the work may experience temporary discoloration of their water. This discoloration consists primarily of harmless silt and air and does not affect the safety of the water.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why does the water system need to be routinely flushed?

A: Marshall Utilities' water distribution system is a complex network of pipes and storage reservoirs where sediment or deposits may naturally accumulate over time. If not removed, these materials may cause water quality deterioration, taste and odor problems, or discoloration of the water. Water may also stagnate in lesser used parts of the distribution system. This can result in degraded water quality.

Q. When does flushing normally occur?

A. Normally, flushing takes place for approximately a one week period in late fall and early spring during a time of generally lower water demand.

Q. What should I do when I see Marshall Utilities' crews flushing hydrants in my area?

A. If you see Marshall Utilities' personnel flushing hydrants, PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY and watch for workers in or near the roadway. In addition, the roads will be wet and the water may pond in low-lying areas for a short period of time. Inside your home, avoid turning on any faucets or fixtures while crews are flushing the hydrants. This may draw discolored water into your home piping. In particular, avoid washing clothes during the flushing operation. Discolored water may be drawn into the washer and potentially stain clothing.

Q. How will this affect my water?

A. During the actual flushing process, water customers may experience some disturbance in their usual water service such as a short-term decrease in water pressure or discolored water. Although the water does not pose a health risk, you may want to avoid drinking the water for aesthetic reasons. Plan ahead and store a container or two of water in your refrigerator for use during this time.

- Don't prepare baby food or formula if the water is discolored. Use bottled water or pre-prepared food and formula.
- Do not wash clothes if the water is discolored.
- It is okay to use the water for showering, bathing, and toilet flushing.

Q. What should I do after the flushing?

A. If you use tap water during or immediately after flushing, it could come out with sediment or be discolored. If you encounter discolored water, shut the water off and wait approximately ten minutes. After ten minutes, open several cold water faucets in your home allowing new water to work its way into your pipes. Leave the faucets running for several minutes until the discoloration is gone and the water runs clear. In some infrequent cases, customers may experience slight discoloration for a few hours. This discoloration only affects the appearance of the water; it does not affect the taste or water quality. Lastly, avoid washing laundry until the water is clear from the tap. Wash a load of dark clothes first.

Q. What should I do if my water pressure or volume seems low after flushing?

A. Check your faucet and washer screens for trapped debris.

Q. Why does the water look funny after hydrant flushing?

A. When a hydrant is opened, there will always be temporary incidences of discolored water containing fine sediment particles making the water appear brown or rust-colored. In addition, fine air bubbles may be introduced into the water giving it a milky appearance. There is no health hazard associated with discolored water. Allow a few hours for discoloration to dissipate. To verify the water has settled, allow your cold water tap to run a few minutes. If the discoloration persists for more six (6) hours, please contact Marshall Utilities at (608) 381-9380.

Q. What is the sediment in the water system and how does it get there?

A. Water naturally contains minerals which react with the inside of the pipe to produce the by-product. This chemical reaction between the pipe and water is a normal and natural process. This process can occur on the inside of the pipe and prevent an adequate volume of water flow. The flushing process removes much of this by-product.

Q. What takes place during hydrant flushing?

A. Marshall Utilities employs a conventional flushing program whereby water is flushed from hydrants for a set amount of time or until water flowing from the hydrant becomes clear; whichever takes longest. Because Marshall Utilities' water mains are designed to handle fire flow (which is much greater than domestic or commercial water flow), the velocity of flow in most mains is fairly low under normal conditions. Due to this, solids may settle on the bottom of the pipes. The problem may be more significant where there are dead-end pipes or areas of low water use. Over time, these deposits reduce the "carrying capacity" of the pipe. They can also be a source of color, odor, and taste problems in the water if the deposits are stirred up by increases in the flow. Flushing the pipes at high velocities will normally remove most of the settled substances and discolored or stale water. During the flushing process, a Water Distribution operator opens each hydrant to its maximum flow. This high flow stirs up iron deposits and settlements and removes them from the system. The operator cleans and lubricates accessible operating parts. Any deficiencies in the hydrant are noted and placed on a schedule for repair.

Q. Doesn't the hydrant flushing program waste water?

A. While it may appear wasteful, flushing is the most effective way to keep our drinking water safe, clean and pleasant tasting. Crews conducting the flushing keep careful records of the amount of water that is flushed through the lines. Therefore, this water is accounted for and tracked along with other uses of water.

Q. How can I find out when hydrant flushing will be performed in my area?

A. Signs are posted along Village streets one week prior to flushing, and the Village also places an article in the local newspaper. The scheduled time is also communicated through the Villages website and Facebook page. Please remember this schedule is a planning tool and may be off by one or two days due to field conditions.

Q. Where can I get more information about hydrant flushing?

A. You may contact the Director of Public Works, Brian Koll, at (608) 381-9380 during normal business hours.