

Watermain Flushing Program: Improving Drinking Water Quality

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Why are you flushing the watermains?

We clean watermains to improve water quality by removing sediment. Water travels slowly through the mains, causing sediment to settle at the bottom and over time builds up. A change in direction or rate of flow of water in the mains, for example during breaks or hydrant use during fire fighting, can disturb the sediment and discolour the water.

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How do you clean the watermains?

We force water through the mains at high speed and discharge it through hydrants. This scours and cleans sediment from inside the mains. We leave the hydrant open until the water runs clear.

How long does it take to flush the watermains on each street?

Flushing takes approximately 30 minutes to one hour to complete.

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How will I know when you are flushing watermains on my street?

Roadside Notice boards will be posted in your area advising that flushing is taking place.

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Can I use my water when you are flushing the watermains on my street?

Please do not use your water or flush your toilet when we are cleaning the watermains on your street. If you do, you could draw sediment into the water pipes in your building and as a result, into water filters, washing machines, hot water tanks etc. Turn off any time delayed water systems such as dishwashers, coffee makers and lawn sprinklers.

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Will I notice anything different after you have flushed the watermains?

Your water may be discoloured. Water is sometimes discoloured after watermain cleaning but this should not last long. Do not use discoloured water for any purposes that require clean water such as preparing food and beverages, medical and dental procedures or laundry.

- ***Turn on a cold water tap and let the water run for a few minutes.** Do not choose a tap that has a water filter connected to it otherwise the sediment may clog your filter. Do not use a hot water tap because it could draw sediment into your hot water tank.*
- *Catch some water in a light coloured cup or container to see if it is clear. If the water is clear, you can use your water as you normally would.*
- *If the water doesn't clear in five minutes, wait two hours and try again.*

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What should I do if the water is still discoloured after two or three hours?

If this happens Monday to Friday 7:30am to 4:00 pm please call 250-469-6241. After regular business hours or holidays please call 250-868-5299, leave a message and one of our Environmental Services staff will contact you.

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What if someone drinks the water when it is discoloured?

Drinking discoloured water should not make you sick; however, it may not smell, taste or look pleasant.

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What else may I notice about my water after you have flushed the watermains?

Immediately after cleaning you may notice that your water is cloudy or has a chlorine smell.

- *Cloudy water – water is cloudy when air gets in it and makes tiny bubbles. These bubbles are harmless and will disappear if you let the water sit for a few minutes.*
- *Chlorine smell – we add enough chlorine to the water to keep it safe. You can easily get rid of the chlorine taste by filling a container with water and keeping it in the refrigerator for drinking – much of the chlorine will leave the water overnight.*

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How will you monitor the water quality during the flushing program?

Regional District Environmental Services staff will randomly collect samples and test water quality from hydrants, homes and businesses during the flushing program.

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Why can't you flush watermains at night?

It's safer for staff to work on the streets in daylight. As well, it's easier in the daylight to see when all the sediment has been flushed from the mains and the water is running clear.

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Is watermain flushing a waste of water?

No. We are using a diffuser which minimizes the amount of water that we use during the main flushing process.

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Where will you drain the water used in the flushing program?

We will discharge the water into the street drainage ditches and/or catch basins. We use a product (Sodium Thiosulfate) to remove the chlorine from the water before it is discharged.

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Do other local governments and utilities have similar watermain flushing programs?

Many local governments and water utilities have some type of flushing program to clean their watermains. This is considered the best way to improve water quality and increase the reliability of the distribution system.

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Is this the first time the Regional District has had a watermain flushing program?

We have always used conventional flushing to clean watermains in specific neighbourhoods and correct water problems. This annual program flushes all the watermains in the RDCO water system areas.

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How will you pay for this watermain flushing program?

Funds from the water utility rates are used to pay for this program. Water rates will not be increased to pay for this maintenance program.

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