



City of St. Augustine Unidirectional Flushing Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the field crew doing and why?

The city is implementing a common utility maintenance procedure called flushing. It involves opening specifically-selected fire hydrants under controlled conditions to scour the inner surface of water distribution pipes. The scouring process helps to remove corrosion scale and sediment that accumulate naturally over time. If otherwise left in place, these deposits could degrade water quality and restrict pipeline-carrying capacity.

I lost water service. Why and what do I do?

Though not intentional, this happens from time-to-time during the flushing program. During flushing, certain valves are closed to provide control over the direction of flow. It is likely that a valve closure resulted in loss of supply to your block. The field crew will be sent to your block immediately to investigate and identify which valves may be closed and need to be re-opened.

Will I be paying for the water used in flushing?

No. Each residence and business is individually metered at the service connection to determine consumption. Your utility bill is based on your specific meter readings.

Why does flushed water (hydrant or at-the-tap) appear discolored?

The color is due to the presence of solids that are scoured from the surface of the pipes. These may include sand, sediment, iron (rust), and manganese, all of which are naturally-occurring and common to virtually every water system. At the levels that cause mild discoloration, these solids are not harmful, although they may impart an undesirable taste to the water.

What are the precautions to take during flushing?

During flushing, customers are advised to avoid using water in order to keep sediments from entering the pipes in their houses. It is advisable to refrain from washing clothes or dishes, shut off ice-makers, turn off automatic coffee-makers and other automatic water dispensers and avoid using hot water, as sediments may be deposited in the tanks.

Although the water should not pose a health risk, it is best to avoid drinking the water until it runs clear from the tap.

How do I get rid of the discolored appearance?

Customers are advised to fully open their cold water faucets in their kitchen and bathroom to flush this water out of their service piping and plumbing lines. In most cases, the water should begin to run clear again within a few minutes.

Is the water safe to drink after flushing?

Yes, the city has maintained compliance with all state and federal drinking water quality standards. The city performs frequent monitoring at its well sources and throughout the system to ensure the safety and aesthetic quality of your water. Each year, the city prepares the Water Quality Report for all our customers. This report summarizes the results of testing and provides a comparison to regulatory standards. We are performing flushing as a proactive measure to further enhance water quality and help ensure continued compliance with regulatory standards.

Is this counterproductive to conservation?

The city strongly values, encourages and practices water conservation measures. In developing the flushing program, the city considered the impact of water use and weighed that against the known benefits of flushing. While a fair amount of water is used and is necessary to create an effective scour, the city uses a flushing practice called unidirectional flushing that is specifically designed to reduce overall water usage. Also, in a given neighborhood, flushing is conducted relatively infrequently – generally once every few years – so over the long run the amount of water used is relatively small.

Who do I call with questions?

You may call the Public Works Department at 904. 825.1040 with any questions or concerns.