



Burlington Water Resources

Hydrant Flushing Program

The annual or semiannual flushing of water mains, via fire hydrants, is a standard practice in the water industry and is necessary to maintain the integrity of our water distribution system. The process improves water quality and flows by removing sediment and tuberculation (a buildup common in iron pipes) from the water mains. It also allows us to inspect the fire hydrants and ensure they are in excellent working order.

Frequently Asked Questions

◆ How Do You Flush a Hydrant?

There are 708 City owned fire hydrants in Burlington and the first step is to visually inspect the hydrant for any needed repairs or maintenance. Then we attach a diffuser to the hydrant outlet, fully open it and flow the water at a high velocity until it runs clear. This process can take up to 45 minutes. The diffuser is attached to the hydrant so our sidewalks, roads and unpaved surfaces are not damaged by the velocity. The condition of the hydrant and relevant flushing details are electronically recorded onsite and updated to GIS in real time. We optimized the flushing route so each water main (major and minor) is completed along with the related side streets before advancing to another area. The entire process typically takes up to four months with one team member working full time on hydrant flushing.

◆ Will I Be Impacted By This?

Most residents experience fluctuating water pressure or discolored water when the hydrants closest to them are being operated. Properties located in the vicinity of several hydrants may be impacted to a greater extent. Discoloration happens when the naturally occurring minerals and sediments that accumulate in water mains are disturbed by the flushing process.

◆ When Will The Water Go Back To Normal?

In order to restore water clarity, residents are advised to run a cold water tap for several minutes or until the discoloration is gone. This is most effective when done after we have finished flushing the hydrant(s) on your street.

◆ Can I Use Discolored Water?

We recommend waiting until the water quality is restored before using it for drinking or laundry. We also recommend that you avoid using the hot water because the sediment can be drawn into the water heater.

◆ Did You Provide Any Public Outreach?

Absolutely! We printed a message on the water bills, sent a public service announcement to all local media outlets, posted a notice on both Front Porch Forum and Facebook and we sent a direct email to customers with an address on file.

◆ Where Can I Find More Information?

Please visit www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW/Hydrants to review our daily flushing schedule, the interactive hydrant map and other relevant information about hydrant flushing and maintenance. You can also reach out to Water Resources Customer Care with additional questions or feedback during our business hours (M-F, 8-4:30) at 802-863-4501 or water-resources@burlingtonvt.gov.
