



FAQs on Water System Flushing

What is water main flushing?

Sediment and minerals (such as iron or manganese) build up slowly over many years, settling at the bottom of the water mains. This buildup can impact color, odor and even the taste of water. A home filtration system is always a good idea, but commercial flushing of the mains is necessary to improve the overall quality of your water. Flushing at appropriate velocities removes these sediments and mineral deposits. The increased flow rate is what scours the inside of the water pipes. The water is subsequently discharged through designated fire hydrants and you will see the mineral deposits as solid flakes.

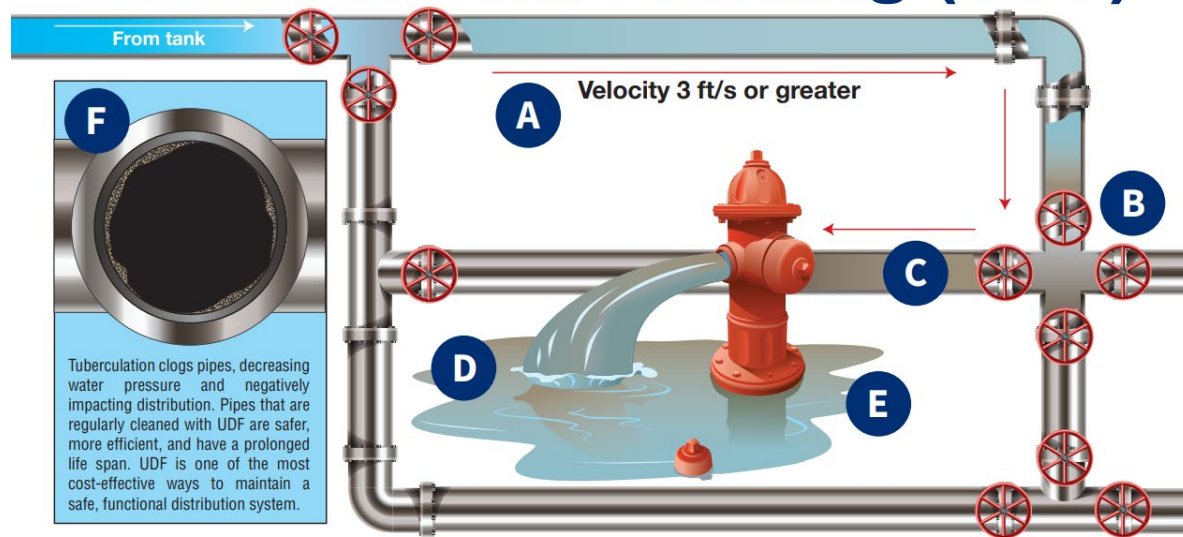
Why is water main flushing important?

In addition to improving your drinking water quality and eliminating sediment and mineral buildup, the process of commercial flushing is critical to the overall maintenance of a water distribution system. It not only improves the carrying capacity of pipes and helps scour the sediment and mineral buildup within the mains, but it ensures the proper operation of the distribution system components including fire hydrants and pipe valves.

What is unidirectional flushing (UDF)?

Water utilities will often employ unidirectional flushing, which is where water mains are flushed systematically from areas closest to the source water to the outer edges of the water system. It is a comprehensive process where by the water is forced through the water mains at a high speed, discharging through the hydrants. This high speed is what is needed to scour and clean the mains. During UDF, valves are opened and closed, and this type of exercise helps to prolong the useful life of both hydrants and valves. UDF actually uses up to 40% less water than conventional flushing!

Unidirectional Flushing (UDF)



Infographic: Tata & Howard

How am I affected by flushing?

There is sometimes a slight drop or even a fluctuation in water pressure, accompanied by a discernable discoloration in the water due to the minerals and sediment that are being flushed out. During this flushing process, you may see operators temporarily marking off traffic and parking areas for safety.

Should I do anything once the flushing is completed?

When you have been advised that the flushing activity is over, you are encouraged to do the following:

- Run a cold water tap closest to your meter (typically an outside tap used for a garden hose, but this may differ; for those with basements, that may tap may be the closest, and for others, it may be a first floor sink), up to 15 minutes
- Keep the tap open until the water runs clear. If you have trouble determining the clarity, it may help to fill a white or light colored cup for viewing
- If the water doesn't appear clear after 15 minutes, wait 15-30 minutes and run again
- Do NOT run a tap that has a water filter connected to it or the minerals/sediment may clog your filter
- Avoid running HOT WATER initially, as that could draw the sediment/minerals into your hot water tank
- For sediment that may have entered your hot water tank, use the clean out tap at the bottom of the tank to remove any settled material. Follow the instructions that came with the tank, to drain the tank (and be careful of the hot water)