

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Green Bay Water Utility's Unidirectional Flushing

What is 'unidirectional flushing'?

Unidirectional flushing is a maintenance procedure used to scour, clean and improve the carrying capacity of our water distribution system. This procedure helps us continue to provide our high-quality drinking water to our customers.

The water distribution system is set up in a grid-like pattern which allows water to be fed from several directions at the same time. When performing unidirectional flushing, Utility staff open and close pre-determined valves in order to isolate a specific section of water main. Staff will then flush this section of main by opening a specifically-selected fire hydrant that will draw water through the now-isolated section of water main. Since the water main is isolated and is only being fed from one direction (hence the term 'unidirectional'), the speed of the water flowing through the isolated section of main is greatly increased, producing a scouring effect. The scouring effect removes any potential sediment build-up and cleans the water main.

Test samples are collected from the water as it exits the flowing hydrant. The samples are then immediately tested to determine the turbidity (clarity) of the water. The duration of each unidirectional flushing sequence is determined by the turbidity of these tests. Once the test samples show that the turbidity is at or below the targeted level, the hydrant will be closed and the process is complete.

How will I know when unidirectional flushing will be taking place in my neighborhood?

We will mail notification postcards to all customers serviced in the neighborhoods where we will be performing the unidirectional flushing program. Information is also available at <http://gbwater.org/>, [Twitter](#) and on our [Facebook page](#).

Each morning our crews place notification signs in the terraces of commonly traveled streets in the vicinity of where flushing will be taking place that day. If you see these signs by your neighborhood please check our website, we may be nearing your location soon!

Please be aware there is no way we can determine an exact date/time we will be by your location. Please regularly check our website and follow us on Twitter and Facebook for updates regarding the progress of our flushing program.

I am a water-sensitive customer. How can I make sure my service is uninterrupted?

We realize some of our customers are water-sensitive for a variety of reasons (businesses, medical concerns, etc). Although we strive to provide continuous service to our customers, there may be brief durations of low water pressure for customers adjacent to where we are performing the unidirectional flushing. If you have concerns about maintaining continuous water service, please contact us at 920.448.3480. We cannot guarantee uninterrupted service but we can coordinate with you directly to keep any interruptions to a minimum.

What should I expect when unidirectional flushing is happening in my neighborhood?

Unidirectional flushing will have a minimal impact to the majority of our customers. Customers in the immediate vicinity of where flushing is taking place may experience a temporary drop in water pressure. If this does occur, please be aware that Utility staff is diligently working to minimize any inconvenience caused to you by our flushing process.

Flushing typically occurs Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.

How long does it take to flush each water main?

Our experience has ranged from 20 minutes to an hour or possibly longer and is dependent on a variety of factors. Factors include the age of the water main, the type of pipe, the length/diameter of the water main being flushed, and if any sediment buildup is present.

The time is ultimately determined by the turbidity (clarity) of the water being flushed. Test samples are collected from the water as it exits the flowing hydrant. The samples are immediately tested to determine turbidity of the water. Once the test samples show the turbidity is at or below the targeted level, the hydrant will be closed and the process is complete.

Can I use my water when flushing is taking place?

Yes, you can use the water while we are flushing on your street. Please be aware, however, that our flushing process may stir up rust particles and sediment that may have accumulated over time in the water main. If you use water while we are flushing you may notice discolored water. You may also experience low water pressure while we are flushing. Your pressure will return to normal once our flushing has ended.

Does unidirectional flushing waste water?

Unidirectional flushing does not waste water. Our water source is Lake Michigan. Our water is drawn directly from Lake Michigan, near Kewaunee. The water used during our unidirectional flushing program drains into the City's storm water system. It then drains into the Fox River or a different tributary leading to the Bay of Green Bay and eventually back to Lake Michigan - right back where it came from.

How will the water being used be paid for?

Funds from the Utility rates pay for this program, just like any other maintenance program we have. Water rates will not be increased to pay for unidirectional flushing.

Each residence and business is individually metered to determine each customer's individual usage. Your Utility bill is based on your specific meter readings.

Who do I call with additional questions?

You may call us at 920.448.3480 with any questions.