

Uni-Directional Flushing: FAQ

Why is the PUC “flushing” the watermains?

Flushing the watermains improves water quality by removing sediment that slowly builds up at the bottom of the watermain over time. The sediment comes from internal corrosion of the watermains over many years.

How does unidirectional flushing (UDF) work?

During the UDF process water is forced through the watermains at a high speed and discharged through hydrants. The fast-moving water scours and cleans the mains. We leave the hydrants open until the water runs clear.

How will I know when the PUC is cleaning the watermains in my neighbourhood?

The PUC will inform residents before starting the flushing program by posting notices on its website. Also, during the flushing activities you will see yellow signs on streets where flushing is taking place. Please visit www.smpuc.com for a map of the areas affected by the flushing activity.

What should I do if my water is discoloured after PUC has flushed the watermains?

Water is sometimes discoloured after watermain cleaning, but this should not last long. In the event you draw discoloured water into your home, the PUC advises customers to flush a cold tap only for up to 15 minutes maximum. As a precaution, prior to using hot water run the cold water tap for a few minutes to ensure discoloured water is not drawn into your hot water tank.

How much does the water I use to flush my taps cost me?

The PUC advises customers that do experience discoloured water to flush a cold tap only for up to 15 minutes maximum. 15 minutes of flushing a typical household faucet cost about 9 cents.

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

It takes about 30 minutes to 60 minutes to flush the watermains on each street.

What should I do if the water is still discoloured after 3 to 4 hours?

Contact PUC Services at 705-759-6522 or after 4:30 p.m. at 705-759-6555.

Why can't PUC clean the watermains at night?

It is safer for staff to work on the streets in daylight. Also, daylight provides better visibility to see when all the sediment has been flushed out and the water is running clear.

Is watermain cleaning a waste of water?

No, this is a normal and necessary part of maintaining a safe and reliable drinking water supply.

Are there other benefits to using the UDF technique?

Yes, in addition to removing more sediment and using less water than conventional flushing, UDF tests and exercises the water system valves and hydrants.

Do other cities have similar watermain cleaning programs?

Many cities have some type of flushing program to clean their watermains (e.g. conventional flushing or UDF). UDF is considered the best way to improve water quality and increase the reliability of the water distribution system.

How will I be affected?

Flushing will generally occur between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. for most neighbourhoods. Specific hydrants will be used to discharge water. There may be a slight drop in pressure or noticeable discolouration of the water from the minerals and sediments that are being flushed out. Water service should not be disrupted during the flushing process.

Additional Information:

Flushing may cause short-term pressure fluctuations along with sediments in the water reaching your home or business.

To clear your water:

- The PUC advises customers to flush a cold tap only for up to 15 minutes maximum. Do not choose a tap that has a water filter connected to it, or 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. You can use your water if it is clear.
- If the water coming from your tap doesn't clear in 15 minutes, wait 30 minutes and try again.

Chlorine smell:

- PUC adds only enough chlorine in the treatment process to keep the water safe for consumption. You can easily get rid of the chlorine taste and smell by filling an open container with water and keeping it in the fridge for drinking – much of the chlorine will leave the water overnight.

**If you have any questions or concerns, contact PUC Services:
Monday - Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm (705) 759-6522
After Hours @ (705) 759-6555**