



Hydrant Flushing Facts & Frequently Asked Questions

What is hydrant flushing?

Hydrant flushing is the quick release of water from fire hydrants. It's a controlled procedure that is vital to the general maintenance of the Town of Centreville's water distribution system.

Why is hydrant flushing necessary?

Hydrant flushing is necessary to improve water appearance, clarity and quality by clearing settled iron and other minerals from the water mains. It also ensures water flow is available to residents, businesses and firefighters. By flushing water through the pipes, the settled minerals are stirred up and are flushed out of the mains. Iron and other minerals can temporarily look like tea colored water coming out of a hydrant, but the water is still safe to use and drink. This process helps avoid random bouts of rusty water if there is a large demand for water, such as a major firefighting effort. Mains are also flushed to physically operate the hydrant called "exercising" and to inspect for hydrant maintenance needs to keep our community safe and ready for emergencies.

How often does the Town of Centreville flush the mains?

The Town currently flushes hydrants two times a year. Anticipated schedule is once in the spring and once in late fall/early winter.

What should I do if I see crews flushing hydrants in my area?

Please drive carefully and watch for workers in or near the roadway. In addition, be mindful that the roads will be wet and the water may pond in low-lying areas for a short period of time.

In your home, avoid turning on any faucets or appliances while crews are flushing.

How long does it take to flush hydrants and is there a schedule when crews will be in my area?

The Town of Centreville has >250 hydrants to flush. The flushing and maintenance can be a lengthy process, but is necessary to ensure the best quality of water and to be prepared for any emergencies that arise in the community. Typically, this process can take several weeks to complete due to staff availability, other scheduled work, emergency fixes in the area and weather conditions. An anticipated schedule is posted on the Town of Centreville website for your reference. It also states that dates are subject to change. If your community has a Homeowner's Association and would like an email prior to flushing, please contact the Public Works Department, (P) 443-262-4602 or you can email Jacki Payne at jpayne@townofcentreville.org.

Why is it important to know when flushing will be completed in your area?

As the stirred-up water passes by your water service on the way to the hydrant, some discolored water can go up into the service line leading to your house if you have a faucet on or an appliance that is drawing water (i.e. Washing machine, dishwasher, etc.). While low concentrations of minerals are harmless, it can discolor the water causing residents concern about quality and/or stain clothes in the laundry machine. Even if there is not much iron to flush out, caution should still be exercised when running loads of laundry during this process. If flushing is taking place, do not open the faucet or use water until the flushing is completed in your area. If you are not home and appliances aren't running at the time of flushing, it is unlikely that you will draw in any discolored water.

My water is discolored – what do I do? Is it safe to drink while flushing?

Yes, discolored water is safe to drunk and use, however, it may stain laundry. If your water is discolored, wait until the hydrant flushing in your area is complete, then run a garden hose for 5 minutes, or cold tap water for 10 minutes, until the water runs clear. If you have a water softener and are experiencing discolored water, place the until into "regeneration or cleaning mode" after flushing is complete in your area. Remember, rust colored water is safe, but may stain laundry.

If my laundry gets stained – what can I do?

Keep the laundry wet and use an iron or stain removing product like "Iron Out" rust and stain remover.

What if I have other questions?

If your question has not been answered in the above, please contact the Public Works Department, (P) 443-262-4602, or email Jacki Payne at jpayne@townofcentreville.org for further assistance.

Tips for Minimizing Water Discoloration during Hydrant Flushing in Your Area

- Limit your water use if flushing crews are scheduled to be in the area, if possible.
- If you have discolored water, wait until flushing is completed in your area then either:
 - Run a garden hose for 5 minutes until water is clear
 - OR
 - Run cold tap water for 10 minutes until water is clear
- If you have a water softener and are experiencing discolored water, place the until into regeneration, or cleaning mode, after flushing is completed in your area.
- Remember, rust colored water is safe, but MAY stain your laundry. If this happens, keep clothes wet and treat with an Iron Out stain remover.