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NEWS RELEASE

City reminds residents, businesses to protect water and sewer systems

Durango, CO: The city of Durango Utilities Department wants to remind residents and businesses of steps to take to protect water and sewer systems and keep water safe to drink.

Water systems in vacant or minimally occupied homes or buildings should be flushed regularly. Prolonged water stagnation in pipes can cause elevated levels of lead, copper and [Legionella](#) at the tap. Guidance for flushing water systems is attached to this news release.

“Crews have been seeing low chlorine residuals within less inhabited buildings,” Assistant Utilities Director Jarrod Biggs said. “This may impact the taste and smell of your water, but if not resolved through some flushing, could become more problematic.”

Another problem has been over-abundance of “flushable” wipes causing sewer backups. Items other than toilet paper should not be flushed, including napkins, paper towels and “flushable” wipes.

“Wipes and other solids catch on things in the sewer system, cause blockages and can result in backups within homes, businesses or even into the street,” Biggs said. “If there is any question whether to flush or not to flush, throw it into the garbage.”

Please contact city utilities staff at (970) 375-4801 with any concerns or questions.

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Tips for flushing water systems

- Remove or bypass devices like point-of-entry treatment units (filters or softeners) prior to flushing.
- Take steps to prevent backflow or the siphoning of contaminants into plumbing (e.g., close valves separating irrigation systems from plumbing, disconnect hoses attached to faucets, etc.)
- Organize flushing to maximize the flow of water (e.g. opening all outlets simultaneously to flush the service line and then flushing outlets individually starting near where the water enters the structure).
- Run enough water through all outlets (e.g., hose bibs, faucets, showerheads, toilets, etc.), removing aerators when possible. Typical flushing durations can range from 10 to 30 minutes for each outlet. A good rule of thumb is to feel the temperature change in the water, it will be cold when clean fresh water from the water main enters the premise.
- Flush the cold-water lines first, and then the hot-water lines. Note: the hot water tank can be drained directly; it can require roughly 45 minutes to fully flush a typical 40-gallon hot water tank.
- Replace all point-of-use filters, including the filter in refrigerators.
- Additional precautions may be warranted if there is excessive disruption of pipe scale or if there are concerns about biofilm development. Actions that might be warranted include continued use of bottled water, installation of a point-of-use device, or engaging a contractor to thoroughly clean the plumbing system.

More information is available from the [American Water Works Association](#) and the [Water Research Foundation](#).