

# Frequently Asked Questions about Water System Flushing

From time to time you have probably seen Public Works or Fire Department personnel running fire hydrants/flushing valves or a device attached to hydrant releasing water. We're sure that many of you have often wondered about this activity. The Town's staff has developed this list of frequently asked questions in hopes that it will help you better understand this process:

## What is water system flushing?

Hydrant flushing is simply the periodic opening of a fire hydrant nozzle and valve to allow water to flow from the hydrant.

## Why is flushing necessary?

Flushing of hydrants is necessary to promote water quality and test hydrants for pressure & flow. Chlorine residuals in the water distribution system can drop drastically at certain times during the year. Maintaining good chlorine residual levels is essential to ensuring proper system disinfection and is required by law. Flushing the system helps to maintain these residuals, particularly in areas with long residence times (i.e. water that spends a long time in the pipe before being used).

In addition, fire hydrants can be flushed to analyze the flow and pressure in an area. These tests are often performed by Fire Department personnel and are typically done for insurance rating purposes.

## How often/long are the hydrants supposed to be flushed?

It depends. Flushing is performed until the chlorine residual is brought to an acceptable level. On large lines at the far reaches of a water system in the hottest summer months this can take hours every day.

## What are the alternatives to flushing?

Looping lines in the distribution system will significantly reduce the amount of flushing required for water quality purposes. The Town is currently considering several projects in its Water & Sewer Capital Improvement Plan to address these issues in several areas.

## Is flushing wasting water?

Absolutely not! The quantity and cost of the water used is insignificant when compared to the benefits of assuring you quality drinking water.

## Why has the Town installed automatic hydrant flushers?

Because the Town's water distribution system is still growing it contains many "dead end" mains (i.e. lines not connected to other lines that create loops). The manpower requirements to properly flush the system were significantly reduced with the installation of the flushers. These flushers will be in service mainly during the peak times of the year.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Todd Taylor, Public Works Director @ (704) 455-4719 or by email: [ttaylor@harrisburgnc.org](mailto:ttaylor@harrisburgnc.org)