AMERICAN WATER

WE KEEP LIFE FLOWING®

FLUSHING INTERNAL PLUMBING AT YOUR FACILITY

Flushing is a tool schools and businesses can use as a best practice to improve overall water quality following repairs to internal plumbing and/or periods of inactivity.

WHAT IS FLUSHING?

Flushing replaces stagnant water by running fresh water through all fixtures. This helps maintain water quality throughout the building.

WHEN TO FLUSH

- **If the property has been vacant** over a weekend, holiday, or seasonal breaks (spring, summer, or winter). Flushing should be done **biweekly during closures** (if possible) and **immediately before reopening** to ensure fresh water is circulating and to prevent stagnation.
- **Following plumbing repairs or changes** to your plumbing system.
- **If lead is detected in water samples**, flushing can be used as a temporary remediation activity.

DEVELOP A FLUSHING PLAN

- Know the plumbing layout of your facility and identify appropriate flushing times for each fixture.
- Document and retain dates/times flushing performed.
- Capture and reuse flushed water for plants or cleaning.

HOW TO FLUSH

Routine Full Building Flush After Vacant

Begin on the highest or most distant floor of the building. Start with the fixture farthest from where water enters the facility, opening **cold** water taps as you go. Continue working toward the water entry point, opening each tap in sequence.

Once all taps are open, allow water to run for 10 minutes to ensure fresh water reaches all parts of the system. Then, close the taps in reverse order, starting from the entry point and moving outward. Temperature change or chlorine smell can be an indicator that fresh water has reached fixtures within the plumbing system.

Be sure to monitor all open fixtures during flushing to avoid damage from leaks or flooding. Seek professional help where needed.

Flushing After Lead Service Line Replacement

Replacing a lead service line has been shown to potentially cause temporary increases in lead levels. To help minimize the risk of dislodging and distributing lead sediment that may have been disturbed during replacement work, follow the same general process as a full building flush with **two key differences**:

1. Flushing should start at the closest point to where water enters the building. Begin on the lowest or nearest floor, opening the fixture closest to the water entry, and work your way outward through the building.
2. The amount of time needed to flush may need to be increased for larger, more complex plumbing systems.

Flush Individual Fixtures

This following guidance can be used when replacing or repairing the below fixtures or as part of your routine flushing program.

- **Faucets and showers:** Run cold water at full flow for at least 1 minute or until cold. Longer times may be needed depending on location.
- **Refrigerated drinking water fountains:** Run for 15 minutes. It may be more economical to replace these with lead-free, NSF-approved devices.
- **Non-refrigerated drinking water fountains:** Run water for 30 seconds to one minute or until cold.
- **Toilets:** Flush at least twice.
- **Other appliances:** Run at full flow to flush fresh water through the system. For appliances with filters (i.e., refrigerators or ice makers), replace filters per the manufacturer's instructions after flushing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the US Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.
- EPA Maintaining or Restoring Water Quality in Buildings with Low or No Use
- 3Ts Flushing Best Practices
- EPA's 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water for schools

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