

## Frequently Asked Questions about Swabbing Watermains

### **Question: What is watermain swabbing and flushing?**

**Answer:** Watermain swabbing is a process to clean a watermain by inserting a soft material shaped like a bullet into the watermain through a fire hydrant. The diameter is slightly larger than the watermain and the bullet (swab) is pushed along the watermain by water pressure. As it passes through the watermain, the swab executes a scouring action on the sediment inside the watermain.

During watermain flushing, high velocity water flowing from hydrants is used to remove loose sediment from watermains.

### **Question: What time will the work be done? Will it be done on weekends or holidays?**

**Answer:** The work is scheduled to be done during the normal business hours of the Utilities Department. These hours are Monday – Thursday 7:00 am to 4:00 pm, and Friday 7:00 am to 12:00 pm. The swabbing will not start until 7:30 am to allow you time to get ready in the morning.

In some instances, the work may continue past the regular schedule in order to complete the work in a specific area.

You will be notified when the swabbing is to be completed on your street by the Utilities Department.

### **Question: How does the Utilities Department notify customers affected by the program?**

**Answer:** Utilities uses a number of methods to inform customers of planned watermain cleaning and possible discoloured water caused by the program. Notification is done by the following methods:

- Hand-delivery of notices to each customer's door at least one day before the swabbing is to be completed in your area
- Information posted on the Township website at [www.townshipofsevern.com](http://www.townshipofsevern.com)
- [Information will be posted on the Notice Board at the Coldwater Library](#)

**Question: What should I do when the watermain on my street is being cleaned?**

**Answer:** BEFORE the watermain cleaning on your street begins, you should:

- Fill a clean container with tap water for drinking and cooking and store this container in your fridge;
- Complete dishwashing, clothes washing, and other water use activities prior to the watermain cleaning start time indicated on the notice you received;
- Fill your bathtub with water for use around the house;
- Use a pail to transfer water from the bathtub to your toilet bowl to allow your toilet to flush;
- Turn any water treatment systems, including water softeners, to bypass or shut off main water supply using inside shut off valve located at your water meter.

DURING the period of watermain cleaning on your street, you should:

- **Avoid using water, including hot water, as this will likely draw discoloured water into your home's piping; and**
- **Avoid washing clothes or doing dishes as discoloured water may cause stains.**

AFTER the watermain on your street has been cleaned you should:

- Run a cold water tap closest to your water meter (usually located in the basement) until the water is clear if possible. Alternatively, remove the aerator at another tap and run the cold water. **Do not select a tap with a filter system on it, as it is possible the sediment will clog the filter.**
- If the water remains discoloured after 15 minutes of flushing, please turn off the tap, wait 60 minutes, and repeat the 15-minute flushing process again. If your water does not clear after 2 hours, please contact the Utilities Department at 705-325-2315 or [utilities@townshipofsevern.com](mailto:utilities@townshipofsevern.com) for assistance. After business hours, the Utilities Department can be reached at 1-855-527-8841.
- If your water is clear, turn on your water treatment or softening devices, flush each tap to remove discoloured water from your piping, flush your toilets during normal use to remove discoloured water from your toilet tank, and resume normal use including drinking the water and clothes washing.
- If you have low water pressure, please verify if it is localized to one tap, or throughout your home. Try removing and cleaning the aerator at the localized tap and running the tap without the aerator until the water clears.
- Contact the Utilities Department at 705-325-2315 or [utilities@townshipofsevern.com](mailto:utilities@townshipofsevern.com) if you have no water or low water pressure throughout your home, after the watermain cleaning has been completed. After business hours, the Utilities Department can be reached at 1-855-527-8841.

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

**Answer:** It takes approximately 2 hours to swab the water mains on each street. Some streets may be affected for 4 or more hours due to their location within the system. A few locations may be affected two or more times during the process. This is due to the property location within the system. A separate notice will be delivered for each day they are to be affected.

**Question: Where does the sediment in the watermains come from?**

**Answer:** The sediment present in Coldwater's watermains consists mostly of a combination of iron and manganese oxides. Iron and manganese oxides are formed when chlorine combines with the dissolved iron and manganese minerals naturally present in Coldwater's groundwater. These oxides are heavy and will settle-out on the bottom of watermain piping during periods of normal water use.

**Question: Can I drink the water?**

**Answer:** Once the water has cleared, all normal uses can be resumed, including drinking the water. The Utilities Department recommends that customers consume the water when the normal clarity of their water returns.

In the past, samples of discolored water have been analyzed and although it may not smell, taste, or look pleasant, tests have shown that it is safe. Drinking small quantities of discoloured water is not likely to cause a health problem. The most common element in discoloured water is iron, a nutrient found normally in many foods. For customers with iron storage disorders, additional iron in drinking water could present a health risk. These individuals should avoid drinking discoloured water and consult their physicians for additional information.

In compliance with Provincial regulations, the Utilities Department continuously maintains a disinfectant residual in all water supplied to ensure customer safety.

**Question: What should I do if my laundry becomes stained by discoloured water?**

**Answer:** If you are washing clothes and receive discoloured water, stop the cycle while the tank is full and wait until clear water is available to finish. If the spin cycle has finished, then keep the clothes wet and rewash them when clear water is available. If you wash your stained clothes using a commercial rust remover, then follow the directions on the rust remover label to avoid damaging your clothes.