

RULE 37 – FLOODING PROCEDURES DUE TO WATER MAIN BREAKS

Section 1. Extreme cold weather can force frost deeper into the soil causing the ground to shift, triggering a water main break. Sometimes it's the combination of the extreme cold, along with the age of the water pipe, a surge of energy (water), manufacturer pipe defects or a combination of these that cause the fracture. Typically, we are never able to determine exactly what causes a break, however a water main break disrupts customers.

Water main breaks are serious and receive prompt attention. The County cannot prevent all utility disruptions, but the County will evaluate reports of water main breaks and will respond to repair and restore service within an appropriate timeframe to minimize these disruptions. Depending on the type of break, the water may be turned off. The County makes every effort to notify residents before this happens.

Water main breaks are not always immediately apparent, but the most common detection of a problem is when water pools in a street or a yard absent heavy rains. Sometimes it will run out of the ground, through cracks in the pavement, or from behind curbing.

In the event of a water main break, follow these steps:

- During normal working hours, notify the Erie County Department of Environmental Services Water Division at 419.627.7666. Advise them of the severity and location of the problem. Indicate if any people or objects are in imminent danger.
- After hours, weekends, and holidays, or if you fail to get a response at the department's number, call the County's after hours phone center, at 419.625.2372 who will contact the on-call person for response. During water main break situations, please do not rely on voice or e-mail messages as these are generally only reviewed during normal business hours.
- Use extreme caution if any electrical appliances/outlets are near the water. Stop using all electrical equipment.
- Assist with protecting personal property from water damage by removing them from the area.
- Follow any boil alerts recommended by the county for the entire duration of the recommendation.

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Section 2. When the naturally formed scale on the interior of the piping system is disturbed, some water discoloration may occur immediately after the water is turned back on. Our crews work to clear this condition quickly. After a severe water main break, this discoloration may last for several hours. During this time, reduce your water usage, especially hot water. This will limit the storage of discolored water in your water heater and help prevent staining of fixtures or any clothing in your washer.

A. CLEAN UP:

The County will provide restoration for homeowners experiencing reasonable and verifiable damages to their yard, sidewalk, driveway or other outdoor areas caused by a water main break, as well as restoration resulting from our excavation to the homeowners' property. Homeowners will be responsible for their own damages resulting from flooding occurring indoors, including inside homes and businesses, garages and personal property inside of sheds and outbuildings.

B. INSURANCE:

It should be noted that many insurance policies do not cover flooding unless special coverage is purchased. The County strongly encourages that all customers review their policy to determine whether they have coverage. If a water main break could impact finished living space, your business, or cause other hardships you may wish to consider purchasing the additional coverage, and make assurances that your yard is sloped and graded to drain water away from your home.

Section 3. The County conducts routine evaluations of water mains to assure its proper operation. However, breaks in the County water main system most frequently occur as a result of situations beyond our control. Therefore, the County is not held responsible for water damage inside your home or business caused by a water main break unless negligence by the County can be proven, and no sovereign immunity provisions apply. If you experience damage that you feel is a direct result of the County's negligence, contact our Loss Control Coordinator who can be reached at 419.627.7581 during normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday.