

FACT SHEET: WATER QUALITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR RE-OPENING YOUR BUILDING



THE PURPOSE OF THIS FACT SHEET

As a building owner and operator, you are responsible for the water quality in your building. The longer the building has low or no water use, water can become stagnant and result in a higher risk for deteriorating water quality. During COVID-19, reduced or no water use in buildings may present health risks. This fact sheet provides information related to reopening your building's water supply.

WATER QUALITY CONCERNS FROM LOW OR NO WATER USE IN BUILDINGS

When the water is not used, the chlorine used to treat the water is depleted and may result in growth of microorganisms in pipes and fixtures.

Disinfectant is used to treat water and maintain potable water in the Township distribution system. Water left in pipes and fixtures may also absorb toxic metals such as lead from plumbing.

RE-OPENING CONSIDERATIONS

Prepare a plan to restore water quality.

- The best immediate action is to flush every fixture in each building.
- Inspect mechanical equipment to ensure proper function.
- Clean all fixtures including removal and cleaning of aerators, shower heads, etc.

HOW TO FLUSH A LARGE BUILDING

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) provides guidance on restoring water quality when returning to service.

1. Remove or bypass point-of-entry treatment units (filters, softeners, etc) prior to flushing.
2. Ensure your backflow prevention device annual test is up to date. This will prevent the potential of siphoning contaminants into plumbing.
3. Flush to maximize water flow.
4. Run enough water through all fixtures and taps, removing aerators when possible.
5. Flush the cold water lines first, then the hot water lines.
6. Replace (with new) all point-of-use filters, including refrigerator filters.
7. Additional precautions may be needed.

FLUSHING RESPONSIBILITIES

- The building owner is responsible for the water quality in plumbing, including the cost of water needed for flushing.
- Initial flushes of stagnant water may release high concentrations of chemicals and contaminants. Flushing should be conducted in a way to minimize splashing/aerosols.
- For complex systems, specialized plumbing, or buildings serving at risk occupants, please consider hiring an expert such as plumbers or engineers to ensure water quality is properly restored.

IN MOST CASES, FLUSHING BUILDINGS WITH WATER FROM THE TOWNSHIP DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IS SUFFICIENT FOR CLEANING THE WATER SYSTEM



OTHER RECOMMENDED STEPS

- Consider your building's unique characteristics and specialized fixtures, storage and plumbing.
- Begin flushing at the furthest cold water tap (farthest from your water meter) and run water at full flow until cold.
- Systematically flush each tap moving from furthest to closest until water runs cold at each location.
- Flush toilets and urinals.
- If you can measure water quality, it's recommended to measure free chlorine concentration at the furthest tap in each zone. A recommended residual is 0.20 mg/L and a minimum residual is 0.05 mg/L.
- If water heaters and pumps have been shut down, consider hiring an expert to restore the water heating system. Legionella management typically relies on thermal control or onsite disinfection. Hot water systems must continue to operate to minimize potential legionella growth.
- Flushing should be done periodically. It is a best practice, is easy and has proven water quality benefits.
- If there is a strong reason to believe the building's water quality is not restored with flushing, please contact the Township at 519-846-9691.

COMMUNICATION

- Informing occupants: Communication should be provided to all building occupants. Information should include measures to restore water quality and associated risks.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Township of Centre Wellington
www.centrewellington.ca
519-846-9691

RESOURCES

ESPRI & HA Environmental COVID-19 Flushing Guide: https://esprinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FINAL_Coronavirus-Building-Flushing-Guidance-20200403-rev-1.pdf

AWWA Covid-19 Shutoffs and Return to Service Guidance: <https://www.awwa.org/Resources-Tools/Resource-Topics/Coronavirus#10681543-shutoffs-and-return-to-service-guidance>

CWWA Safely Re-Opening Buildings a Fact Sheet for Building Owners/Operators: https://cwwa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Re-Opening-Buildings-FACT-SHEET_FINAL.pdf