

# WHAT'S ON TAP



NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS • FALL ISSUE



## The District tackles flooding with multi-agency taskforce

In September 2020, an intense storm dumped close to three inches of rain on the District of Columbia in under two hours. Areas of the sewer system, built in the 1800s for a different time and population, were overwhelmed, causing sewer backups in some parts of the city.

Together, the District Government and DC Water quickly responded to provide immediate short-term relief for flooded homes. But this storm underscored the urgency to address the growing risk of severe flooding due to climate change. The District has already experienced the very real consequences of shifting global temperatures and weather patterns – including rising water levels and the increasing frequency of flooding.

The impacts of climate change and modern development over the past century have increased the volume and rate of runoff that accelerate flooding conditions.

Flooding preparedness and prevention doesn't fall to any one single agency or utility. So the District mobilized a cross-functional team to identify the causes and to develop an interagency plan of action to equitably address flooding. The DC Flood Taskforce is sponsored by Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure Lucinda Babers and co-chaired by Tommy Wells, Director of the District Department of Energy and Environment, and David L. Gadis, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of DC Water.

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## CEO's Message

Dear Customers:



Though September marks National Preparedness Month, at DC Water we understand that crisis and disaster management is a year-round effort. We have a trained Incident Management Team (IMT) that works closely with external partners, officials, regulators, the media, and the public during both emergencies and planned events.

We activated this team four times in the past year. One of the more recent activations was for a repair project that our operations teams recognized could cause a pressure loss that would lead to a boil water advisory. We took steps to notify the public, the Mayor's office and elected officials, critical customers, and most especially those residing in the affected area so they could plan ahead. We also performed a tabletop exercise with HSEMA. I am particularly appreciative of our operational staff's ability to be forward-looking and comfortable enough to flag the issue for a proactive plan of action.

After each IMT activation, we review the incident through many different lenses, identifying what worked well and what could be improved upon. This discussion leads us to develop processes and procedures, identify additional training or pursue new technologies. This is a continual improvement process to provide timely and critical information to all our stakeholders. Please review the contents of this newsletter—perhaps even save it.

**David L. Gadis**  
CEO and General Manager  
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# Critical customers are vital to our city

## *Protecting them is paramount*

Hospitals, dialysis centers, universities, schools, daycare centers... these institutions have special needs when it comes to water and sewer emergencies. DC Water recognizes these as “Critical Customers” and develops key relationships to prepare for emergencies. The program includes a preparedness resource website section, priority contact lists, and annual training and exercises. If you meet the definition of a critical customer—consumers or service connections that are critical to community resiliency (public safety or health) or demand a large volume of water to sustain economic resiliency, or service a susceptible population—please visit [dcwater.com/criticalcustomer](https://dcwater.com/criticalcustomer)

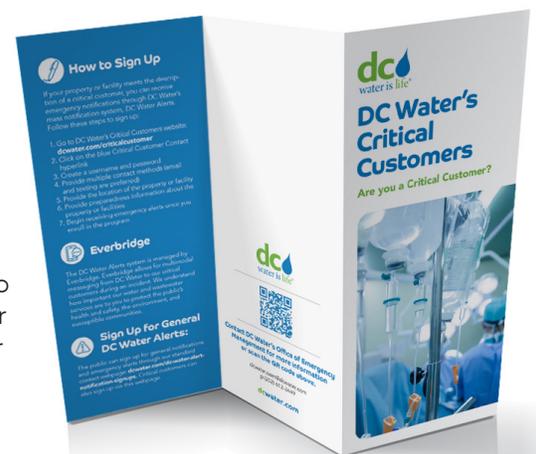
Additionally, if you are a representative of a critical facility and would like to receive emergency notifications related to extended disruptions of water and wastewater services, please sign up via DC Water’s Alert Notification webpage: [dcwater.com/dc-water-alert-notification-signups](https://dcwater.com/dc-water-alert-notification-signups)

### Practice makes prepared

On June 14, DC Water offered the annual Critical Customer Briefing and Emergency Preparedness Exercise. Representa-

tives from 50 different organizations such as hospitals, health care facilities, military installations, government facilities, multifamily dwellings, transit facilities, and response agencies attended.

DC Water provided an overview of response capabilities, emergency incident coordination, critical customer information needs, and emergency alert systems, and applied that knowledge to hypothetical water and sewer emergencies. The event showcased the continued effort to build resilience for DC Water and our critical customer partners throughout the region.



# DC Water leads water sector in hazard mitigation

DC Water is leading the water sector in hazard mitigation and risk reduction, developing long-term strategies to minimize the impact of disasters. DC Water is one of the few water and wastewater organizations with a Hazard Mitigation Plan approved on the local level, by the District's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), and at the federal level, by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The plan, initially developed in 2019, integrates with District government's plan to reduce loss of life and property damage; to protect critical infrastructure, and to create better-prepared and more resilient communities.

DC Water created a cross-functional staff team that meets with partner agencies, assesses future and current risks, establishes projects, and identifies priorities for grant funding. In addition, this Task Force applies findings from assessments and aligns them with the District's hazard mitigation efforts, the District's Flood Task Force, and the organizational imperatives of DC Water's strategic plan, Blueprint 2.0.

A prime example is the assessment of flooding on the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant that sits on the shore of the Potomac River. With the advent of stronger storms, the risk has grown. DC Water's mitigation efforts resulted in the construction of a flood wall that, once completed, will help sustain wastewater operations even during a 500-year flood level. DC Water continues to reduce risk through mitigation efforts to ensure water and wastewater operations are resilient against manmade, technological and natural emergencies.



Conceptual alignment of floodwall segments A, B, and D

## How much water do I need to store?

Did you know that FEMA advises everyone stock a 72-hour supply of water for emergency use? A severe weather event could damage or destroy water and sewer infrastructure. Or a contaminant coupled with a loss of pressure could cause concern of contamination. Residents should stay alert during a disaster and follow the directions of any drinking water advisories. Residents should store enough water to last at least three days, and if possible, store enough water to last two weeks. How much do you need for drinking, toilet flushing and for other uses?



### Drinking Water

You should store a minimum of one gallon per person and per pet for each day. Keep your water in air-tight containers, at room temperature, and out of direct sunlight. Replace bottled water when it reaches the expiration date, or for non-store-bought water, after six months. Use this water for drinking, cooking and brushing teeth.



### Hygiene

Remember, you likely won't have water to bathe, wash dishes or do laundry. So, if you know in advance that the water shut-off or restrictions are coming, you can fill your bathtub, washtub, plastic tubs, large pots and pans and other containers with water to use for toilet flushing or for a quick sponge bath. Those who live in hurricane-prone areas are familiar with the practice of filling their bathtubs with water.



### How much water in total do I need per day?

1 gallon for drinking + 2 gallons for hygiene/flushing = 3 gallons per person per day; 9 gallons per person for 72 hours; and 42 gallons per person for 2 weeks. If necessary, you can use the water in your water heater for toilet flushing.

### Toilet Flushing

- Flush your toilet with a bucket of water. Pour one gallon directly into the toilet bowl.
- Start slowly at first, then quickly add the rest of the water. The toilet shape and pressure push everything through the pipes.
- No need to use the handle or empty the toilet tank. Save the water in the tank for another day of water restrictions.
- If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down.



# Find your shut off valve

## Shut the water flow in an emergency

A burst pipe or leaking plumbing can quickly soak your home or office. Find your emergency shut off valve now so you know where it is in an emergency. Tie a ribbon on it, or better yet, paint it with fluorescent paint or apply fluorescent tape so you can find it, even in the dark.

1. Look for the main valve where the water supply enters your house (usually in the basement) or in a concrete box near the street.
2. If the valve is outside your house, lift the cover with a large screwdriver.
3. Use a pipe or crescent wrench to turn the water off.
4. If you must leave the home when the weather is cold, drain all the water from the system, including the hot water heater.

# Be alerted!

## Sign up for emergency notifications

Sign up for DC Water's alert system to be notified of outages and repairs and for news and press releases:

[dcwater.com/signup](http://dcwater.com/signup)



AlertDC is the official District of Columbia communications system that sends alerts, notifications, and updates from public safety officials and the emergency manager. Learn about traffic conditions, government closures, public safety incidents and severe weather. To get started today, visit [alertdc.dc.gov](http://alertdc.dc.gov)

# District tackles flooding

continued

The goal is to produce actionable plans for nine categories including flood and sewer line backup insurance; repairing flood damage in low-income homes and neighborhoods; flood proofing of individual homes and facilities, and other mitigation and response activities.

In February, the team held a series of public listening sessions and the feedback was incorporated into the action plans. The final report is slated for October 31, with a combination of near-term and longer-term projects. Beyond the sunset date for the task-force, the team will continue to meet several times a year to ensure the recommendations remain on track for completion within 10 years.

Some of the more promising agenda items include a flood insurance product and an emergency management app that tracks incident reports through DC Water's Emergency Command Center and the District's 311 center. This app would quickly identify water and sewer emergencies and also decrease hold wait times for callers in an emergency by automatically rolling over calls to 311 when the volume spikes in the DC Water Command Center. DC Water's IT department managed production of this system to also triage calls and efficiently direct them to the correct department.

It will take the full commitment and resources of the entire Task Force to be successful. More information on the taskforce can be found at [dcfloortaskforce.org](http://dcfloortaskforce.org).



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