

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Baltimore City's Water Main Replacement Program

The City of Baltimore's Department of Public Works (DPW) oversees the Municipal water distribution system. DPW supplies drinking water to 1.8 million people in the Baltimore Metropolitan area which encompasses 3,800 miles of water mains, 76,500 valves and 23,000 fire hydrants. DPW is responsible for maintaining the 1500 miles of mains located within city limits. A program to replace or rehabilitate many of the City's aging water mains is presently underway and may be coming soon to your neighborhood. Here is a list of frequently asked questions about the Water Main Replacement Program.

1. What is a water main?

- ▶ A water main is an underground pipe in Baltimore City's water distribution system. It supplies water to your neighborhood and home.

2. What is the Water Main Replacement Program?

- ▶ The Water Main Replacement Program provides ongoing maintenance and improvements to Baltimore City's existing water distribution system, including replacing and rehabilitating old, broken, or damaged water mains.

3. Why is replacement necessary?

- ▶ Many of the water mains are over 80 years of age. The City of Baltimore is faced with the challenge of updating the old and failing infrastructure and is taking the necessary proactive steps to replace and rehabilitate these aged water mains and provide best-in-class water service to our customers.

4. What is the age of Baltimore's water system?

- ▶ Baltimore City's water distribution system dates to the early 1900s.

5. What is the average lifespan of a water main?

- ▶ About 75-100 years, on average.

6. What is the difference between a water main and a water pipe?

- ▶ The water main is a pipe installed and maintained by the City of Baltimore within the City's right-of-way. A water pipe is the service line that delivers water from the water main to your property.

7. How long will the water main replacement take to complete in the City?

- ▶ Water main replacement and rehabilitation are ongoing. The City of Baltimore has a goal of replacing or rehabilitating 15 miles of water mains annually.

8. How does the city determine which water mains to replace and when?

- ▶ Priority is given to the oldest and most problematic water mains, which may impact the livelihood of neighborhoods and vicinities if they break and fail. By using the latest technologies and detailed analysis methods, problematic water mains may be identified and resolved proactively.

9. What is the difference between water main replacement and rehabilitation?

- ▶ Water main rehabilitation refers to systematic upgrade of an existing main in good structural condition by cleaning and applying a cement lining. Water main replacement refers to the complete removal and replacement of existing piping that is degrading or failing with a brand new pipe.

10. What causes a water main to break?

- ▶ Age, corrosion, soil conditions and ground settlement are common reasons for water main breaks. When the weather turns cold, freeze and thaw cycles can also cause the main to break and fail.

11. When is this work typically done?

- ▶ Construction normally occurs during the spring, summer, and fall. Work may occur at other times as warranted by emergency situations.

12. How long does it take to replace a water main?

- ▶ Several weeks to several months, depending on the work to be done and the size of the main. Each project consists of several water main segments. A project can last from one year to three years depending on the amount of replacement/repair work included in a project.

13. How will I know a water main is being replaced in my neighborhood?

- ▶ Here's what to look for: In some areas, look for the installation of temporary by-pass piping. During the time of water main rehabilitation, the contractor will saw cut the pavement, excavate a trench in the location of the old water main, remove the existing pipe and replace it with a new section or sections of pipe. The contractor will backfill the excavation with crushed stone to prevent settlement and install temporary paving. A moderate amount of noise can be expected from construction equipment, such as jackhammers during pavement removal and excavation equipment and pumps used during water main replacement.

14. What changes should I expect during construction?

- ▶ During installation, residents can expect temporary above ground water main service and temporary connections of house water services. Your water service may be disrupted for a short period of time when scheduled connections to your service are made. You will receive a water shut down notice, notifying you when this will occur. Traffic patterns may be disrupted during construction to keep residents and workers safe. Parking on your street may be affected as the crews need to excavate in the street.

15. How much will this cost?

- ▶ Replacement and rehabilitation costs average \$2.0 - \$2.5 million per mile. The cost for this work is included in the Department of Public Works' Capital Improvement Program, a 5 to 10-year plan which prioritizes capital projects and provides a planning schedule.

16. Is there a cost to the customer?

- ▶ There is no cost to the customer for the replacement and rehabilitation of water mains located in the public right-of-way. The customer is responsible for all costs for the maintenance of the water service pipe located on their property.

17. Will my homeowner's insurance cover this cost?

- ▶ Homeowner's insurance plans do not typically cover repairs to the exterior, underground lines. Please note that DPW is not responsible for upgrades or repairs for lines on private property. Home warranties such as HomeServe USA and others offer its members the opportunity to cover and facilitate repairs to exterior water and sewer lines on the homeowner's side of the property line at affordable prices. Consider teaming up with a home warranty company of your choice as DPW water main system upgrades are being made.*

18. What if I can't afford to pay for the service?

- ▶ Financial assistance for exterior line repairs may be available through HomeServe USA or other warranty companies for homeowners meeting income requirements. To learn more about HomeServe USA, visit www.BaltimoreServiceRepairs.com or call 1-855-807-6631 or contact your home warranty provider.*

19. Will construction affect my property?

- ▶ Construction typically does not affect your property. Temporary water mains (typically yellow in color) may be installed above ground and connected to the location of your water meter. Since the piping is run above ground, you may have to step over it to gain access to the street. You may be notified of a temporary shutdown to connect the water main to your property.

20. What do I do if my property is damaged during construction?

- ▶ Contact the Project Manager identified in work start letters, door hangers, or water shut down notice, or call 410-396-8189. In an emergency situation, call 311.

21. Will I notice any difference in my water service during or after the replacement is completed?

- ▶ Construction activities may cause temporary cloudy, discolored water or lower than usual pressure. If you experience this, please run cold water for up to 15 minutes to flush the piping. You may also notice air in your piping after a connection is completed; this is normal. To prevent clogging at your faucets, it is recommended that you remove the aerator at the faucet when you first turn your water on after a shutdown. If water doesn't clear, please call 311 and say or select "water emergency" for assistance. In the event of a planned temporary interruption in water service, a 72-hour notification will be provided to customers prior to the planned interruption in water service.

22. Will traffic or parking be impacted during construction?

- ▶ Temporary parking restrictions may be necessary to accommodate the installation of equipment. Traffic control equipment and personnel (flaggers) will be visible to maintain the flow of traffic. To assist the Contractor performing the installation, we ask that residents refrain from parking in areas posted for installation and equipment and obey detours and traffic control personnel. We recognize that this process can be disruptive to traffic and neighborhoods. By investing in new infrastructure, DPW aims to continue driving down the number of water main breaks and the inconveniences they cause while providing long-term security for the water system and its customers.

23. Where can I get updates on the status of the replacement?

- ▶ You may Log on to publicworks.baltimorecity.gov for the latest information on the Water Main Replacement Program. If you have questions, you may call (410) 396-8189, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM.

*Homeowners are encouraged to check with their insurance companies and explore their options when deciding whether they should buy these optional private service line protection plans.



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