

## WINTER MAIN BREAKS – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Why do water mains break more often in the winter?

- Water main breaks are more likely to occur when there is a large change in temperature. Freezing and thawing soil creates movement in the ground which can bend or shift pipes.
- When the soil shrinks or swells, it places excess tension on water pipes that can make them snap. Cold temperatures also increase the pressure inside the pipe.
- When the pressure gets too high for the pipe to contain, it ruptures.

### Why is my water shut off during a water main repair?

- Often during a break, the flow of pressurized water is too great and we need to temporarily shut off the water.
- PWSA will send out robocalls to any impacted customers if there is a water outage to let them know what is happening and how long the work is expected to last. Please make sure your [contact information is updated](#) on your account to assure you receive a call in an emergency.

### There is a water main break on my street – why are repairs taking so long?

- PWSA maintains more than one thousand miles of water distribution mains. In January 2016, PWSA made 70 separate water main repairs.
- In extreme circumstances, when the demand to repair broken pipes exceeds our full-time and contractor capacity, PWSA prioritizes work by taking into account the following factors: **public safety, water service disruption, traffic impact, and water loss.**
- Before any repairs can be made, we are required to call 8-1-1 (PA-One Call) to have the pavement marked for underground gas, electric or other utility line.
- Crews work as quickly as possible, and most repairs take about **four to eight hours to complete**. PWSA coordinates efforts with the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Public Works to apply salt when main breaks pool water on freezing roadways.

### There was a water main repair on my street, but the road is not restored – why is this?

- After the break is repaired, the road is temporarily restored; this is called a "[utility cut](#)". PWSA cannot provide permanent pavement restorations until temperatures are warmer in the spring. [Please see PWSA's FAQ on "Street Restoration"](#).

### Is my water quality affected by a water main break?

- Customers impacted by a water main break may experience air in their pipes and the water may temporarily appear discolored. Discoloration can occur when pipes and valves are disrupted during repairs.
- Customers are advised to flush their water taps for a few minutes to clear discolored water from their lines. If issues persist, customers should call PWSA.

Any customer who needs additional information should call:  
PWSA Emergency Dispatch 24/7 at 412.255.2423