

How to Prepare for Planned Water Outages



Planned water outages are sometimes needed to keep Seattle's regional drinking water system flowing with safe, reliable, and delicious water to the more than 1.5 million people we serve. These outages are scheduled in advance and allow Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) crews to perform regular maintenance and make repairs.

Construction and development projects led by SPU or other agencies can also require temporary water outages so utility improvements can be made. These types of projects sometime require two to three water shutdowns for up to 12 hours each while the project is in construction.

While we work to ensure that planned water outages are as short as possible, we know they are still impactful to customers. Here's what you can expect from SPU for planned water outages:

1. A door hanger will be delivered to your home at least two days before the scheduled water outage. The door hanger will contain the date, time, and duration of the outage and a number to call if you have questions.
2. If you live in a multi-family building or apartment, SPU will notify the building manager about the outage. If access is available, SPU will place door hangers in the building's lobby for tenants to see. Please note that SPU is not able to deliver door hangers to individual units in buildings.
3. SPU will work with businesses and schools to help determine the best time to shut off water. This means the water outage and related work may happen at night or when the businesses or schools are closed.



Preparing for a Planned Water Outage

Before the water outage:

- Fill pots on the stove with water for cooking.
- Fill a couple of buckets with water for washing.
- Fill potable water containers for drinking. Assume about one gallon of drinking water per person per day.
- Fill bathtubs with water and use buckets to flush toilets. A toilet will flush when approximately a gallon of water is dumped into the bowl.

During the water outage:

- Try not to operate the water faucets. This will prevent air from entering your plumbing.

Discolored Water After an Outage

Water outages can sometimes disturb the direction or flow of water in the City's drinking water system. When this happens, customers in or near the outage area may experience temporary discolored water. Discolored water comes from internal pipe rust and sediment getting stirred up when the water is turned on after an outage.

The water should clear on its own. Try running the cold water for a few minutes to see if it is clearing or still discolored. If the water does not clear, let the water sit for one to two hours. Then, run cold water for a few minutes in your bathtub or shower. If your home is located on a dead-end line, it may take longer to clear up. If the water remains discolored, please contact SPU's Operations Response Center at (206) 386-1800.

Avoid running hot water if the cold water is discolored. This will minimize filling the hot water tank with turbid water. If you are washing clothes at the time, it is better to stop the cycle while it is full and wait until clean water is available to finish. If you allow the water to empty from the washing machine and go into the spin cycle it is more likely to cause permanent staining to the laundry items.