

# CURRENTS

## PWSA Joins Water Equity Taskforce Learning Exchange

Representatives from PWSA traveled to Buffalo, New York to participate in the Water Equity Taskforce Learning Exchange, a program of the U.S. Water Alliance.



Pittsburgh team (Top row from left: Noble Maseru, Aly Shaw, Billie Vaughn, Glenn Grayson, Will Pickering, Jamil Bey. Bottom row from left: Julie Quigley and Grant Gittlen)

The Water Equity Taskforce Learning Exchange is a collaborative approach to building a more equitable water future by focusing on the specific needs of each city, understanding where there are similarities, and developing policies that will lead to more equitable water management practices.

Pittsburgh's Water Equity Learning Team is made up of PWSA leadership, representatives from local community organizations, the Office of Mayor William Peduto, and the University of Pittsburgh. Other cities participating in the Water Equity Task Force are Atlanta, Buffalo, Camden, Cleveland,

Louisville, and Milwaukee. Before traveling to Buffalo, the U.S. Water Alliance facilitated two convenings in Pittsburgh to determine potential areas of focus.

The Learning Exchange is a unique opportunity to learn from cities facing similar challenges. The Pittsburgh team was able to share their experience and knowledge related to customer affordability programs and addressing lead in water with other cities. Members of the team from PWSA made invaluable connections with peer utilities and have plans to implement several initiatives from other cities.

Providing Pittsburgh with high quality, safe, reliable drinking water is our top priority. Ensuring that

everyone has equal access requires innovative thought, collaboration, and the willingness to implement ideas new to our service area. Our challenges range from balancing infrastructure needs with affordable rates to establishing workforce development opportunities, as well as continuing to address lead in water, challenges presented by climate change, and water quality in schools.

The taskforce provides a network of peer organizations that are essential to helping us develop and implement the policies and practices that are needed in Pittsburgh. The information exchange provided by the other participating cities, as well as the collaboration with our own community organizations, will help to accelerate the changes that are needed within our own community. We are looking forward to continuing to learn from the participants from Pittsburgh and our peer cities. We will continue to share our progress as the initiative continues through the end of the year.

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### COMING UP:

#### 2019 Board Meetings

June 28  
July 26  
(No August meeting)  
September 27  
October 25  
November 22  
December 20  
*Meetings are open to the public starting at 10:00 am at 1200 Penn Avenue.*

#### Operation Better Block (Clusters 1 & 3)

June 4  
*The Wheel Mill; 6:00 pm*

#### Red Oak and Hayson Stormwater Project

June 4  
*Private Residence; 6:30 pm*

#### Operation Better Block (Cluster 6)

June 5  
*Operation Better Block; 6:00 pm*

# RAW TALK

By Executive Director Robert A. Weimar



## Starting to Restore PWSA's Recognition As A "Best In Class" Utility

PWSA is maturing, and others are taking notice. Over the past few weeks, representatives from PWSA have been asked to share their knowledge on expert panels, participate in a national water equity initiative, and present findings at industry conferences. This month, we were also recognized with an award from our engineering peers for the largest water and sewer main replacement project in our history, and we learned we will receive another award for our innovative use of mobile technology.

We know we still have much more work to do, but these accolades confirm to me that we're on track to become the water, sewer and stormwater utility Pittsburgh expects and deserves. These recent achievements are a result of a culture change at play at PWSA that I hope you've noticed. Over the past few years, we've positioned the organization to embrace the following beliefs:

### **We are innovative.**

We've developed industry-leading knowledge and expertise. Others are interested in how they can replicate our success with respect to technology like GIS, mobile work apps, and field operations tactics like trenchless lead service line replacements.

### **We know what we don't know.**

There is no monopoly on good ideas, so we're engaging academia, our utility peers, and private sector firms to advance our mission. By participating in cross-sector dialogues, we eliminate the risk of going at it alone. By looking beyond Pittsburgh for ideas, we're coming out of our shell and learning from others.

### **We embrace transparency.**

The public owns our systems, so it's our responsibility to keep them informed about everything we do. As you will read on page 9, a primary reason why PWSA received an award for the Smallman Street water and sewer replacement project is because we were transparent and engaged the merchant stakeholders impacted by our work in the Strip District. At times, we had to adjust to the Communities' needs, but our open lines of communication allowed the project to be delivered on schedule and under budget. This level of attention to the public will be replicated in all of our future projects of this scale.

### **We're receptive.**

Feedback from our customers and stakeholders comes in many forms, whether it be through community meetings, social media, or casual conversations with friends and family. We make a dedicated effort to engage multiple perspectives as we move forward on key initiatives like stormwater, assistance programs, water quality, and lead line replacements.

Shifting the culture of our organization will take time, but I view our recent accomplishments as confirmation that we're headed in the right direction. Please reach out to any PWSA employee or me if you have ideas for how we can improve your water system and our performance. We are committed to continuing our progress for your water system to be recognized as a "Best In Class" water utility!

**"Shifting the culture of our organization will take time, but I view our recent accomplishments as confirmation that we're headed in the right direction."**

## Getting Stuff Done (GSD): Going above and beyond to help customers



### Beacon Street Water Main Break

A customer who is a civil engineer, recognized the “incredibly hard and sophisticated work” our crews performed until midnight on a Friday repairing a water main break on Beacon Street in Squirrel Hill. He took time to thank our crew by saying, “we have a very hard working, dedicated and talented staff and we are all lucky to have them in this city, as they each displayed a commitment to getting the job done, and getting it done the right way.” Thanks for recognizing our top-notch crew members: Foreman Chris Bruecken, Utility Workers Les Wilson and Melissa Bizub, Truck Drivers Bob Munizza and Lisa Harris, Backhoe Operators Brian Auberle and DelRon Higgins, and Laborers Paolo Tolomeo and Shay O’Brien as they Got Stuff Done!

### Jancey Street Lead Line Replacement

In late April, crews were on Jancey Street in Morningside as part of our ongoing Lead Service Line Replacement Program. Following these successful replacements, a customer wrote us to say, “the crew explained everything to my mom and were pretty spot on with time estimates on water shut-offs and directions on flushing the pipes.” They also said the crews went above and beyond in telling the customers where to park and offered to help walk them around the worksite. We look forward to meeting more customers face-to-face as we continue our path to a lead-free water future.

## Congressional Infrastructure Tour comes to PWSA

### Local Representatives, Infrastructure Committee Chair visit Brueken Pump Station

In early May, local Congressmen Mike Doyle and Connor Lamb hosted House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (OR) to Pittsburgh to tour some of the region’s critical infrastructure projects. The tour highlighted the progress being made locally to advance key projects and underscored the need for Federal investment to keep that momentum going.

Executive Director Robert A. Weimar and PWSA staff hosted the Congressional Delegation at the Brueken Pump Station and briefed them on PWSA’s efforts to renew and upgrade our drinking water and sewer systems and implement new, state of the art stormwater projects. The Congressmen also visited several important transportation facilities.

We’d like to thank Congressman Doyle and Lamb, Mayor Peduto, and County Executive Fitzgerald for organizing the tour, and Chairman DeFazio for taking time to visit PWSA. We look forward to continuing to work with local, state, and federal officials to protect and improve our ability to provide first-class service to our customers.



House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (OR) speaks to the media at Bruecken Pump Station with Congressman Conor Lamb (left) and Mayor Bill Peduto (right)



# PWSA Partnering with the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) for a Development Services Workshop

Throughout May and June, the URA is hosting Building CapaCITY workshops for small businesses and developers that are interested in buying and redeveloping real estate.

The two-and-a-half-hour sessions are designed to cover the most important aspects of the development process from experts in the field. If utilizing public property is your focus, two sessions on May 22nd and June 10th take a comprehensive look at the URA Request for Proposal and property disposition processes. The two remaining sessions will provide more general information about factors to consider for development in Pittsburgh.

We will be participating in the fourth and final session on June 12th, alongside other governmental agencies, to discuss the appropriate channels for regulatory approvals. Any developer or property owner that would like to construct a new building on a vacant parcel or change the use of an existing structure is required to obtain water and sewage approval from PWSA. This often-overlooked step can lead to delays in construction schedules if not initiated at the appropriate stage of development. Our portion of the session will cover how to navigate three of the most common application scenarios and provide resources for property research.

Building CapaCITY will take place at 412 Boulevard of the Allies and is \$10 per session. For a full schedule, session details, and location information, visit [ura.org/events/building-capacity](http://ura.org/events/building-capacity).

If you cannot attend the workshop and would like more information about our development process, please visit [pgh20.com/developer-manual](http://pgh20.com/developer-manual) or e-mail Business & Development Relations Manager Julie Ascioffa at [jasciolla@pgh20.com](mailto:jasciolla@pgh20.com).

## Building CapaCITY

A series of workshops for small businesses and small developers who are interested in buying and redeveloping real estate



### SESSION 1 • May 20

#### Are You a Small Business that Wants to Buy Real Estate?

This session will cover the risks, rewards, considerations, and resources for small businesses who are interested in purchasing real estate. Hear from finance and development experts, as well as a panel of other small businesses who have purchased real estate or utilized URA financing.

### SESSION 2 • May 22

#### URA Development RFP 101

This session will give an in-depth overview of the URA's process for issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking developers to purchase and redevelop publicly-owned property. Topics covered will include the standard components of a URA-issued development RFP, what is needed to respond, how proposals are evaluated and selected, best practices, and how to be notified of URA development opportunities.

### SESSION 3 • June 10

#### Putting it All Together

This session will focus on the URA's standard Disposition Process – how to get from Exclusive Negotiations to closing, and will also focus on the major steps to close on a private transaction. Hear from a panel of peers who have purchased and redeveloped property from the URA.

### SESSION 4 • June 12

#### City Approvals and Contacts

This session will include guest speakers from departments and agencies involved in the review and approval of development projects in the City of Pittsburgh.

**TIME:**  
Sessions are 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.  
Doors open at 5 p.m.

**LOCATION:**  
412 Boulevard of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

**COST:**  
\$10 per session (per person)

- Dinner will be provided
- Accessible through public transit
- Parking garage across street
- Family-friendly event

**REGISTER:**  
You can register for one or all sessions via Eventbrite: [urapgh.eventbrite.com](http://urapgh.eventbrite.com)  
*\*Space is limited*

Contact [engage@ura.org](mailto:engage@ura.org) with questions.





## From Site Plan to Affordable Housing

### PWSA attends Habitat for Humanity Open House for Bennett Street

Location. Number of Bedrooms. Paint Color. As families are looking to purchase a home, these factors are usually of the utmost importance. Rarely do considerations for water meters, sewer lines, or gutter drainage top the list. For PWSA's development services team, these underground components are top priority every day. As new homes are constructed, engineering and administrative staff are diligently reviewing and re-reviewing plans for these essential services.

Most projects that come across our desks are seen on paper and rarely

do we see the completed project in-person. So, when we received the invitation to Habitat for Humanity's May 6th Bennett Street Open House, we gratefully accepted. In place of a large overgrown, vacant lot, four new construction, single-family homes were built. All four homes are to be sold to first-time, income-qualified homebuyers in Homewood.

We thank Habitat for Humanity for including PWSA in this event as it serves as a reminder that our routine, everyday tasks can impact Pittsburghers' lives more than we realize.



## PWSA IN THE COMMUNITY

**Over the past month, we engaged with the community at the following meetings:**

### Maryland Avenue Stormwater Project Meeting

April 30

*Winchester-Thurston School*

### Morningside Lead Info Session

May 1

*Morningside Senior Center*

### Volunteer's Field Stormwater Project Meeting

May 13

*HEAR Corp*

### Riverview Park Stormwater Project Meeting

May 14

*Perry High School*

### Operation Better Block: Clusters 7, 8, 9

May 22

*Bethany Baptist Church*

### Thomas and McPherson Stormwater Project Meeting

May 23

*Construction Junction*

**Interested in learning more? Please contact [communications@pgh2o.com](mailto:communications@pgh2o.com) to schedule a presentation in your community.**





## 2019 Lead Service Line Replacement Program Reaches Early Milestones

Crews beating productivity goals to remove lead and improve water quality



Crews using the “pulling” method, which means PWSA can replace the lead line and avoid digging a trench through the yard.

We completed over 700 public and 600 private lead service line replacements so far in 2019 and are on track to replace over 3,700 more public lines between now and June 2020. The 2019 lead line replacement program began in mid-March in Perry North, Morningside, Homewood, and the Southside Slopes. The program continues to minimize partial lead line replacements by offering no-cost private lead line replacements for customers where we replace the public lead line.

Last year, we replaced a little over 2,000 lead lines, or the equivalent of 7.5 miles of lead pipe. This year’s program is more than twice the size with three contractors providing a total of 14 crews spread across seven work zones. The 2019 program is PWSA’s largest and most ambitious replacement project to date. Funding comes from a combination of low-interest loans and grants from the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST) totaling \$49 million.

This year, work zones were prioritized and selected based on input from PWSA’s Community Lead Response Advisory Committee which is made up of public health, policy, regulatory, and engineering experts. The committee

considered factors such as blood lead levels in children, likelihood of lead service lines, the prevalence of young children, and household income to determine work zone areas.

Each replacement requires extensive, one-on-one coordination with property owners. In order to replace a lead line on private property, PWSA must receive written approval from the property owner. The Lead Help Desk, a dedicated team who manage customer communication and outreach related to lead, has collected over 5,000 signed agreements from property owners in the 2019 replacement program work zones.

Lead Help Desk staff work evenings and weekends to contact customers and walk them through the lead line replacement process. These PWSA teams canvassed thousands of sites to meet with residents, collect agreements, and explain the benefits of the program. Staff also attended a total of 17 community meetings since November 2018 to educate customers about the project and answer questions in-person.

“We’re very encouraged with the pace of the first few months of this priority project. With each lead line replaced, we’re renewing infrastructure and also protecting public health.”

Executive Director Robert A Weimar



## Media and Press Releases

### MEDIA COVERAGE

**PWSA board approves paid leave policy for employees, *TribLive***

**Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to complete addition of lead inhibiting chemical, *TribLive***

**Push for \$2 trillion infrastructure bill comes to Pittsburgh, *Post-Gazette***

**As Initial Deadline Passes, City And PWSA Officials Say They’re ‘Very Close’ To A New Contract, *WESA***

**Strip District businesses hope you visit during Smallman St. construction, *Next Pittsburgh***

### PRESS RELEASES

**2019 Lead Service Line Replacement Program Reaches Early Milestones, *May 21***

**Smallman Street Water and Sewer Project Recognized by Society of American Military Engineers, *May 17, 2019***

**The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority Activates Orthophosphate Facilities in Highland Park, *May 1, 2019***

## Employee Spotlight

Barry King, Director of Engineering and Construction



### What drew you to engineering and what do you enjoy most about it?

A life-long interest in problem solving, being creative, curious, and drawn to challenges seemed to make engineering a perfect career choice. Throughout school, I excelled at math and science and received early acceptance into the Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering Program at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in 10th grade. While taking classes towards my degree, I was hired for several research studies that focused on the analysis and optimization of treatment for major wastewater treatment plants in both Albany and Syracuse, New York. This early hands-on experience set the path for a career in the fields of water and wastewater.

### What prompted you to accept the Director of Engineering position with PWSA?

From 2016 onward I have been involved in the daily design and construction of PWSA's infrastructure

projects as well as coordinating staff and consultant activities. This gave me direct involvement with all members of the department, as well as those throughout the Authority. It did not take long to form a genuine bond and commitment to the staff, the organization, and our customers throughout Pittsburgh. I grew to realize that I was committed to PWSA and the city. This is a real and genuine passion of mine and it was time to make a full commitment. I am "all in."

### How do you envision shaping the engineering department over the next six months?

My vision for the department of engineering and construction is to meet the current and future challenges that come with providing our customers with safe and reliable water, sewer, and stormwater services. I am striving to build upon our growing team of engineers, scientists, and project managers to solidify a strong, competent, and effective staff. Having the support and trust of our administration to lead the department will provide the backing needed to plan and execute the necessary capital projects and system improvements.

### What are some of the challenges the department faces?

With many complex and large-scale projects planned over the next five

years, the ability to identify and retain experienced engineers and project managers is a clear challenge. We must recruit those with the technical ability to meet the demand of our infrastructure needs.

Another challenge we face relates to the metaphor of "building the plane while flying." Pittsburgh, typical of other larger northeastern cities, is dealing with aging infrastructure. We are working to address the challenge of providing uninterrupted quality water while upgrading and replacing infrastructure that is near or at the end of its useful life. All the while, our department is balancing the clear need for affordability, sustainability, and regulatory compliance. Everything we are doing is an investment for today and future generations.

### What do you enjoy doing when you're away from PWSA?

I enjoy spending time with my wife and two children. We love spending time outdoors and enjoy watching our children participate in the many extracurricular activities they are involved in. Since permanently moving back to Pittsburgh in 2011, we have found a renewed appreciation for Pittsburgh's art and cultural scene.

## Dr. Michael M. Domach Joins Our Board of Directors



We are very pleased to announce the arrival of our newest board member, Dr. Michael M. Domach. Since receiving his Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from Cornell University in 1983, he has served on the faculty of Carnegie Mellon University as a Professor of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering. His research focuses on fundamental and applied aspects of cell engineering and biology.

Dr. Domach's many accomplishments include being appointed Editor of Biotechnology Progress, authoring multiple significant research publications, and receiving a Presidential Young Investigator Award from the National Science Foundation. Now a key decision-maker at PWSA, Dr. Domach's scientific expertise will be relied upon in order to help further our renewal as a utility that all Pittsburghers can be proud of.

## May 2019 Gold Drop Awardees:



We are applauding our employees' exceptional efforts with a small but significant token of appreciation, the PGH2O Gold Drop. The PGH2O Gold Drop is a pin in the shape of a water drop that symbolizes the shining example each individual is within the Authority. These selfless individuals set a high standard and inspire our team to go above and beyond expectations. Congratulations to the following employees:

**Dan Cleary**, Associate Project Manager, Engineering

**Phil Conway**, Water Repair Foreman

**Frank Davis**, Chemist I

**Ruari Egan**, Engineer III

**Lucas Erny**, Senior Manager Capital Projects/Lead

**Keith Evans**, Leak Detection Specialist

**Darryl Grier**, Leak Detection Specialist

**Debra Hearn**, Leak Detection Specialist

**John Nagel**, Accounting Specialist

**Steve Pressley**, Leak Detection Specialist

**Chris Valore**, Plant Operator, Class A

## New Hires

**Kate Mechler**

*Deputy Director of Engineering*

**Sarah Bolenbaugh**

*Senior Group Manager, Water Programs*

**Hali Hetz**

*Public Affairs Associate*

**Caitlyn Zallow**

*Human Resources Intern*

**Jacey Martini**

*Safety Intern*

**Shannon Connell**

*Cooperation Education Intern*

**Thomas Gottschalk**

*Field Technician II*

**Jennifer Smith**

*Field Technician II*

**Roy Rowe**

*Field Technician II*

**WELCOME ABOARD!**

## Job Postings

Interested in working with us? PWSA is looking for dedicated people to join our team.

**Engineering Tech I**, Administration/Customer Service

**Project Manager**, Engineering & Construction

**Education and Outreach Associate**, Public Affairs

**Help Desk Technician II**, Management Information Technology

**Scientist II**, Environmental Compliance

**Plumber**, Field Services

**Customer Service Representative** (Full-time and Part-time), Customer Service

Visit [www.pgh2o.com/employment](http://www.pgh2o.com/employment) to learn more.



## Smallman Street Water and Sewer Project Wraps Up, Wins Project of the Year from Society of American Military Engineers (SAME)

Largest project in PWSA's history wins Engineering Project of the Year at SAME annual banquet

Weeks after completing final restoration of the northern portion of Smallman Street, PWSA staff (pictured right) accepted an award for the Authority's \$13 million, 11-month long project that replaced water lines, storm, and sanitary sewers in the Strip District.

In February of this year, it became apparent that the project between 16th and 21st Streets on Smallman Street would finish ahead of time and under-budget. The construction management team decided to extend the work up to 23rd Street, upgrading even more ageing water mains and coordinating with planned Peoples Gas work in that same area.

PWSA's project management team worked closely with merchants of this historic neighborhood to accommodate busy shopping seasons and events throughout the year while still maintaining an aggressive construction schedule. The team canvassed the neighborhood to ensure merchants had a direct line to the PWSA construction team if they had questions or concerns, attended multiple meetings per week with the business owners in the corridor, and planned several media events throughout to promote the project. It was crucial to work with the Strip District community and remind the Pittsburgh region that businesses in the Strip

remained open during the extensive construction work.

SAME's Project of the Year was jointly awarded to PWSA as well as the United States Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District and WSP for their Temporary Power Project in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

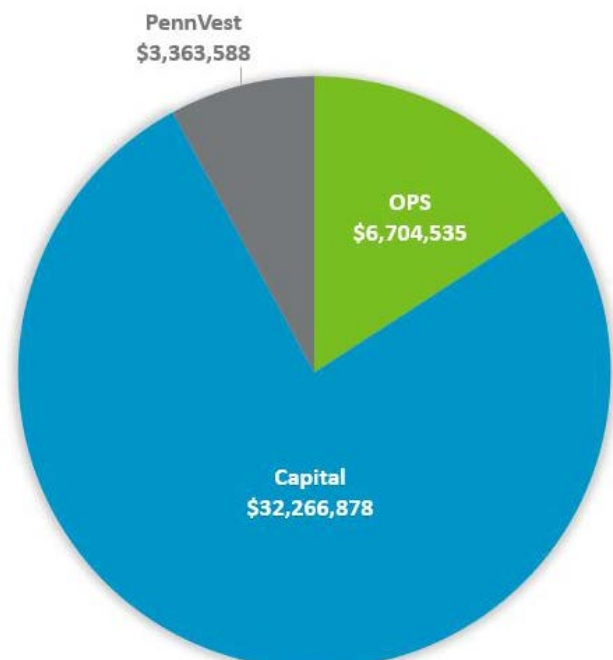


*Pictured from Left: Construction Communications Officer Mora McLaughlin, Project Manager Manda Metzger, and Executive Director Robert Weimar at the SAME Pittsburgh Post's Annual Banquet.*

## 2019 YTD Expenditure

Report includes all paid Vendor Invoices and Contractor Pay Applications from January 1, 2019, through May 21, 2019, received but not yet finalized/approved.

Capital	\$ 32,266,878
Operations	\$ 6,704,535
Pennvest	\$ 3,363,588
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 42, 335,001</b>





# WATER WISE

## Keep Our Infrastructure Clear of FOG Clogs!

Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) is a leading cause of sewer backups into basements.

FOG comes from meat fats in food scraps, cooking oil, shortening, lard, butter and margarine, gravy, and food products, such as mayonnaise, salad dressings, and sour cream. When these items are poured down kitchen drains, they build up inside sewer pipes, which eventually restricts the flow in the pipe. This build up and flow restriction causes untreated wastewater to back up into buildings, resulting in high costs for cleanup and repairs.

If FOG build up gets bad enough, sewage from manholes can overflow into parks, yards, streets, and storm drains, resulting in contaminated waterways. Exposure to untreated wastewater is a public-health hazard.

Here are some easy ways to keep FOG out of the public sewer system:

### 1. COOL IT



### 2. CAN IT



### 3. TRASH IT



- Refrain from pouring grease down sink drains.
- Scrape all excess food and grease from plates and other utensils into the trash.
- Clean up oil and grease with paper towels and discard them, or pour off the grease into a container, let it congeal, and discard the container in the trash.
- Don't pour leftover frying grease down the drain or toilet. Take it to a Hazardous Waste site, or pour it into a sealable container and dispose of it once it's filled.



## Fire Hydrant Safety



Since this is the last edition of Currents before summer, it's a good time to remind customers that opening fire hydrants is not only illegal, but very dangerous.

During periods of extreme heat, customers may be tempted to pry open fire hydrants to cool off, however, it is better and safer to grab your sprinkler or go to the pool instead! Water with extreme force can easily cause injury. The only people qualified to touch fire hydrants are the licensed professionals that open them in order to maintain our water distribution system and fire fighters.

If you suspect hydrant tampering, please call 911 immediately.



## Customer Assistance Program

Our Customer Assistance Program is designed to provide financial relief for income-qualified residential customers who are having difficulty paying their water and sewer bill.

For more information about our programs, including the Winter Shut-off Moratorium, Bill Discount, Cash Assistance, and Free Private Lead Line Replacements, please visit [pgh2o.com/CAP](http://pgh2o.com/CAP) or call Dollar Energy Fund at 866.762.2348.



## Do We Have Your Number?

Did you know that we call customers during water emergencies and outages? Please verify that we have the best number to reach you. You can even add multiple numbers for your account, so your entire household is informed about our work.

### HOW DO I UPDATE MY CONTACT INFORMATION?

Call PWSA Customer Service: 412.255.2423

Or visit our website: [pgh2o.com](http://pgh2o.com) and click on "Update Contact Info"

*PWSA is committed to maintaining and protecting the confidentiality and privacy of our customers and will not share your information with third party vendors.*

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## Executive Leadership

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