

CURRENTS

PWSA and Community Partners Announce Pittsburgh's Water Equity Road Map

An Equitable Water Future: Pittsburgh



Water Quality & Environmental Health



Sustainable Stormwater Management



Affordability



Workforce Development



Water Democracy

US Water Alliance and Pittsburgh leaders representing Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, community-based organizations, and academia released An Equitable Water Future: Pittsburgh. This report outlines strategies to advance five high priority water equity priorities in Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Water Equity Taskforce worked for two years to investigate challenges and potential solutions to systemic disparities and ways to ensure all residents benefit from a sustainable, inclusive, and just water future. This roadmap discusses recommendations in five priority areas: water quality and environmental health, sustainable stormwater management, affordability,

workforce development, and water democracy. The Pittsburgh Water Equity Taskforce built these recommendations in close collaboration with diverse stakeholders from across the city and has begun the work to bring them to life.

Collaborators on this project include:

- Common Unity PGH
- Neighborhood Allies
- Our Water Campaign (convened by Pittsburgh United)
- Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority
- PolicyLink
- University of Pittsburgh's Center for Health Equity
- The UrbanKind Institute
- Pittsburgh residents passionate about access to clean, affordable water

Water shapes economic growth, the environment, and the social fabric of communities. The group of collaborators that created Pittsburgh's Water Equity Roadmap envision a community where all residents have access to safe, reliable, and affordable drinking and wastewater services and are resilient to floods and other water-related climate risks. There is also an interest to see residents participate in the decisions pertaining to their water services and benefit from the increased investment being made in our local water systems. Water is so intricately linked to equity because it is necessary for sustaining life, and the water services we provide need to work in favor of Pittsburgh residents and the populations we serve.

COMING UP:

Next Board Meeting: April 23

For a complete list of PWSA's board and community meetings, please visit pgh2o.com/events-meetings.

Following COVID-19 restrictions, meetings are held virtually and may be tentative or postponed.

"PWSA understands the opportunity we have to be a community partner that helps everyone in Pittsburgh thrive, and we want to be a forward-looking utility that helps make Pittsburgh a more equitable place to live," says Will Pickering, Chief Executive Officer. "I'm grateful that PWSA had a chance to collaborate with such thoughtful and invested partners from across Pittsburgh and the country."

AN EQUITABLE WATER FUTURE Pittsburgh



To read the [full report](#), and see our press release, visit pgh2o.com/news-events.

DIRECTOR'S CUT

By Chief Executive Officer Will Pickering

Help With Your Water and Sewer Bill is a Phone Call Away

Recognizing that many of our customers may continue to face economic hardships due to COVID-19 or other unforeseen circumstances, we have expanded our customer assistance programs and are offering flexible payment plans for customers at all income levels. If you need help paying your bill, are carrying a balance, or think that you may benefit from our assistance programs, we encourage you to call us to learn which options are right for you.

Flexible Payment Plans

For the first time in our history, we are offering payment plans to help customers at all income levels. If you are earning between 250% and 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL), you can be placed on a payment plan making it possible to pay your balance over one to five years without accruing interest or paying additional fees. Even if you don't fall within these income limits or are a small business owner, additional payment options are available, and we can put you on a plan to fit your circumstances.

Customer Assistance Programs

We offer a variety of customer assistance programs for income-qualified customers that can help you reduce your monthly water and sewer bill, provide cash grants to put towards an unpaid balance on your water bill, and protect you from water shutoffs during the winter months. More information about enrolling in the following programs is available at www.pgh2o.com/cap.

- **Bill Discount Program:** Provides a discount of \$35.78 – a 100% discount on the first 1,000 gallons of fixed water charges for customers at or below 150% of the FPL. An additional 20% reduction on water usage is also available for our most vulnerable customers enrolled in the program.
- **Hardship Grant Program:** Cash grants, up to \$300 per year, is available through our Hardship Grant Program for water customers at or below 150% FPL. Our average household grant is approximately \$285 and since 2018 we have helped more than 370 Pittsburgh households maintain water service.
- **Winter Shut Off Moratorium:** From December 1st through March 31st customers at or below 300% of the FPL can enroll in the Winter Shut-off Moratorium to avoid having water turned off during colder months.
- **Lead Service Line Reimbursement Program:** As part of PWSA's Community Lead Response, we will assist customers with the cost of private lead service line replacement if customers choose to proactively hire a plumber and complete the work. Please visit lead.pgh2o.com for more information.



PGH2O Cares

Our newly launched PGH2O Cares team is proactively contacting customers that need extra support. They are providing one-on-one assistance to describe our customer assistance programs, explain the benefits of enrolling, and work with customers to identify opportunities to reduce water usage and save money. Representatives from our PGH2O Cares team are actively calling customers to understand their circumstances and to encourage them to enroll in our programs and utilize one of the new payment plans.

Since 2017, we have invested approximately \$328 million in capital improvements to construct needed upgrades to water and sewer facilities, storage tanks, and pumping stations. This investment in our critical water infrastructure will continue over the next several years to improve drinking water quality, improve system reliability, and meet all regulatory standards.

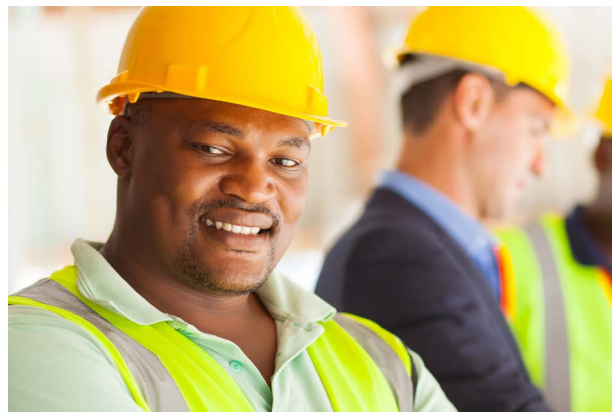
We have made several enhancements to our customer assistance programs to balance affordability concerns for our lower income customers while investing in our aging infrastructure. As a publicly owned and managed water and sewer authority, every dollar we receive from ratepayers is reinvested back into our infrastructure and the improvements we are making to provide high quality, reliable water and wastewater services.

To learn more about the payment plans and our Customer Assistance Programs, please contact our Customer Service Department at (412) 255-2423, email the PGH2O Cares team directly at pgh2ocares@pgh2o.com, or visit pgh2o.com/cap to see which program is right for you.

Buying Better

2021 Procurement Opportunity Events

The 2021 procurement season was off to an energetic start in March with two of Pittsburgh's most reliable contracting opportunity events. Emily Pontarelli, Senior Manager of Performance, represented PWSA at the 20th Annual MWDBE Business Opportunity Conference on March 4th. With an overarching theme of "Getting Back to Business," the conference recognized the abundance of available work with public agencies in our region. URA Deputy Director Diamonte Walker set the tone with her passionate keynote speech, highlighting each black-owned business owner that had become a partner under her tenure, and emphasized the policies that should have been in existence long ago. Minority and women-owned businesses are ready to not only get back to normal but get back to a better normal. The most notable adjustment from previous events was virtual networking. Groups of 3-4 entities held a roundtable discussion in small breakout rooms to give attendees the chance to have more intimate one-on-one conversations with decision-makers.



Our Supplier Diversity Programs encourages minority, women, veteran, and service disabled veteran businesses to participate in contracting opportunities with PWSA.

Our second event on March 12th brought us to the Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania (CAWP) to present our upcoming construction contracts. An abundance of work is forthcoming with 33 planned projects in 2021. This year's CIP is focused on our Water Reliability Plan, with nearly \$148 million budgeted. Major projects include Highland II Reservoir Liner and Cover Replacement, 2021 Small Diameter Water Main Replacement Program, Herron Hill Reservoir Chemical Feed, and 2021 Surface Restoration Program.

Thank you to both the MWDBE Governmental Committee and CAWP for giving PWSA the platform to share our upcoming opportunities.

Make sure to register your business to receive notifications of new solicitations at pgh2o.com/developers-contractors-vendors/bids-opportunities/solicitations.

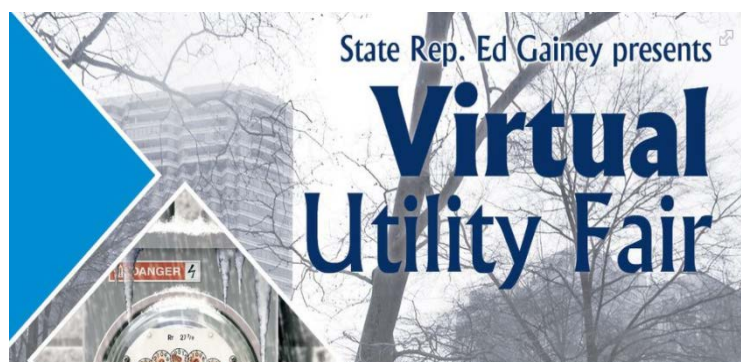
Representative Ed Gainey Hosts Utility Town Hall

We were pleased to once again join Representative Ed Gainey at one of his Virtual Utility Fairs on February 25th. These events are always a welcome opportunity to reach out to customers and share information on our various programs that can often provide significant assistance on monthly water bills.

In our [February issue of Currents](#), we announced some significant changes and enhancements to our Customer Assistance Programs, which include the Bill Discount, Hardship Grant Assistance, Winter Shut Off Moratorium, and Lead Service Line Reimbursement. PWSA Director of Administration, Julie Quigley, explained these programs and participants were also introduced to our new PGH2O Cares team. The PGH2O Cares staff will work directly with customers on enrollment and answer any questions about which programs will be of the greatest benefit.

We always enjoy a chance to work with our peers from other utilities on our joint mission to help our most vulnerable customers, and we are grateful to Representative Gainey for providing the forum to share our information.

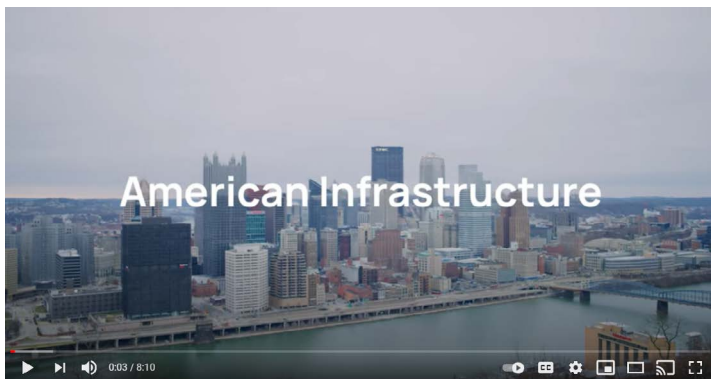
To learn more about our programs for income-qualified residential customers who are having difficulty paying their water and sewer bills, please visit pgh2o.com/CAP.



The Human Side of Infrastructure

A mini documentary features the importance of PWSA's Community Lead Response.

The American Society of Civil Engineers featured the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority in a mini documentary highlighting Pittsburgh's Community Lead Response during the annual 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure. The 10-minute video showcases the human side of infrastructure, describing the partnerships, collaboration, investment, and ingenuity to lower lead levels throughout our drinking water service area.



In June 2020, lead levels throughout Pittsburgh fell into compliance at 5.1 parts per billion (ppb). This is approximately 10ppb below the state and federal lead action level of 15ppb and are the lowest lead levels Pittsburgh has experienced in 20 years.

The lower lead testing results demonstrate the effectiveness of adding orthophosphate to our drinking water treatment process. In addition, we are continuing to aggressively replace lead service lines, are monitoring our water treatment improvements, and are working towards our goal of replacing all lead service lines by 2026.

Since implementing our Community Lead Response in 2016, we have removed 8,319 public lead service lines and 5,391 private lead service lines at no direct cost to ratepayers. Now that lead levels comply with the federal action level, we will continue to remove lead service lines in conjunction with water main replacement projects taking place across our water service area.

PWSA has spent approximately \$90 million on its lead line replacement program and is continuing this level of investment in other critical water infrastructure projects. In 2020, we invested a record \$122 million on capital improvements aimed to strengthen our infrastructure and provide more reliable service to customers. This is the largest annual investment in our history and over the next five years, as we implement our 2021-2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the public can expect to see this level of investment continue.

"It is a great honor to be featured during the 2021 Report Card. With all eyes on infrastructure, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority appreciates that ASCE took the time to produce this documentary and tell our story about our Community Lead Response," remarked Will Pickering, PWSA's Chief Executive Officer. "While it takes deliberate planning and investment to construct these projects, our first priority is to ensure that our customers and the citizens of Pittsburgh have safe and reliable water services. The documentary is a reminder that infrastructure touches each and every one of us," Pickering stated.



Media and Press Releases

MEDIA COVERAGE

US Water Alliance, Pittsburgh leaders release Water Equity Roadmap, *Water World*

Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority Selects VertexOne to Optimize Business Operations and Customer Service, *Business Wire*

U.S. infrastructure improves slightly but still receives C-grade, civil engineers say, *Post-Gazette*

PRESS RELEASES

When you need a helping hand, call on PGH2O Cares, *March 25*

PWSA's Community Lead Response Announces Successful 2020 Construction Year, *March 18*

Pittsburgh Leaders Release Water Equity Roadmap, *March 11*

PWSA Announces Partnership with VertexOne, *March 9*

The Human Side of Infrastructure, *March 4*

Employee Spotlight

Public Affairs Associate, Nick Letzkus, wears many hats as part of the Public Affairs team, and is a critical part of customer outreach during emergencies.



The goal of PWSA's Public Affairs department is to enhance relationships with the many groups we work with outside of our organization, like elected officials, customers, local communities and neighborhoods, charitable organizations, unions, media, among many others.

Nick Letzkus, Public Affairs Associate, started with PWSA as an intern in 2018. In that role, he witnessed first-hand how complicated it can be working at a utility company - from field operations, engineering, customer service - it takes hard work, commitment, and a passion to help people. Nick was up for the challenge and ready to juggle multiple responsibilities, including important communications to customers.

Nick was hired to his current position full-time in 2019. When he reflects on his time here, he feels a sense of pride in how far we've come in a relatively short amount of time.

"When I was an intern, I had the chance to work closely with our Community Lead Response team, who have since continued to work tirelessly to reach our goal of a lead-free water distribution system by 2026. Being part of such progress reminds me of just how worthwhile it is to work in public service," Nick said.

One of Nick's more time-consuming and complex tasks involves the daily robocalls to customers informing them of water outages that can suddenly leave them with no water. This is especially challenging during the freeze-thaw cycles of the winter months, when upwards of 10 emergency or planned water outages may occur any given day!

Many people do not realize the complexity of the behind-the-scenes communications to get information out to the public for water outages. It takes tireless, daily coordination with our Operations and Dispatch departments, as situations happen 24-hours a day and change very quickly.

Nick is the thread that connects the workers in the field making the repairs, the dispatchers who take the customer calls, and then making the robocalls to all impacted customers. PWSA calls customers for outages that are planned for construction work, or for the many emergency breaks that can result in a water service outage or significant street closure.

Nick also provides support to the Public Affairs department by monitoring and providing reports on PWSA coverage in the media, responding to inquiries on social media, and writing for our monthly *Currents* publications!

"I've always been more inclined towards a career where I can develop my written and verbal communication skills," he said. "In college, I took a lot of English writing classes, and I'm thrilled that I can continue to develop these working in the Public Affairs department at PWSA."

One of Nick's favorite challenges is being tasked with writing about someone or something that is

unfamiliar. This provides an opportunity to reach out to different people in the organization get a deeper understanding of other departments and functions.

When Nick is not in the office, he is looking forward to the warm weather and planning trips involving hiking, canoeing, golf, and other outdoor ventures. Although he has always enjoyed these activities, he now appreciates them even more, since they are often the only safe way to let off steam during the pandemic.

"I feel great pride in how far we have come as an organization. Being part of such progress reminds me of how worthwhile it is to work in public service."

Job Postings

Interested in working at PWSA? We are looking for dedicated and talented people to join our team.

Laboratory Manager

Water Quality and Compliance

Plant Operator

Water Quality & Production

Electrician

Water Quality & Production

Security Manager

Water Quality & Production

Talent Acquisition Specialist

Human Resources

Project Manager

Engineering & Construction

Associate Project Manager

Engineering & Construction

Inspector II

Engineering & Construction

Steamfitter

Field Operations

Plumber

Field Operations

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

Customer Service

New Hires

WELCOME ABOARD!

Jacob Arbasak

Field Service Technician II

Angela Carney

Customer Service Representative I

Cassandra Geramita

Account Clerk

Michaael Janicky

Customer Service Representative I

Brian Nestor

Customer Service Representative I

Frank Sidari

Environmental Compliance Director

Visit pgh2o.com/careers to learn more.

District Report: Water Main Replacement and Green Stormwater Infrastructure Investment in District 8

Oakland, Point Breeze, Shadyside, Squirrel Hill.

Planned Water Main Replacement

In summer of 2021, PWSA will begin efforts to replace 6.2 miles of water mains throughout the city as part of the annual Small Diameter Water Main Replacement Program. These mains were selected due to their age, size, or the number of leaks on the pipe in recent years.

- Bigelow Boulevard (Forbes Avenue – Fifth Avenue)
- Morewood Avenue (Fifth Avenue – Ellsworth Avenue)
- Castleman Street (Morewood Avenue – Amberson Avenue)
- Bellerock Street (Wilkins Avenue – Woodmont Street)
- Bellerock Place

Stormwater Investments

Similar to other Council Districts in Pittsburgh, there is a significant focus to better manage stormwater in District 8. In 2020, we completed the first phase of the Wightman Park Stormwater Project in Squirrel Hill. This project was a partnership with the District 8 Council Office, City of Pittsburgh, and the Squirrel Hill neighborhood.

The project improved the park's safety, accessibility and includes new stormwater infrastructure that promotes better drainage and captures stormwater runoff in a raingarden and underground storage system constructed beneath the baseball diamond.

This spring, construction will begin on the second phase of the Wightman Park Stormwater Project. New stormwater improvements will direct stormwater runoff from portions of Wightman Street, Solway Street, Woodmont Street, Negley Avenue, Solway Street, and Murray Avenue to capture and direct stormwater to the new infrastructure within Wightman Park.

Later this year, we will also construct the first phase of the Maryland Avenue Stormwater Project in Shadyside. This highly-anticipated project will focus on improvements along Howe Street and Kentucky Avenue between South Negley Avenue and College Street to reduce basement backups, neighborhood flooding, and combined sewer overflows that commonly occur during heavy rains.

Sewer Rehabilitation

This spring, crews have begun sewer rehabilitation throughout District 8. Sewer rehabilitation is a minimally-invasive effort to prolong the life of existing sewers using sewer lining technology. Crews insert and cure liners inside sewers via manholes to create a protective barrier. Streets where sewer will be rehabilitated include:

- Chesterfield Road
- Lytton Avenue
- Ruskin Avenue
- Bellefield Avenue
- S. Neville Street
- 4600 and 5200 block Forbes Avenue
- Ivy Street

For more information about these and other construction projects, please visit pgh2o.com/projects-maintenance.



The stormwater cascade collects rainfall from the street and directs it into the stormwater infrastructure constructed in the park.

2021 Capital Spending

Dedicating funding to improve drinking water quality and reliability.

Through March, The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority invested over \$9 million in Capital Improvement Projects. The Authority plans to invest in areas that improve infrastructure reliability and efficiency. PWSA remains committed to improving the water distribution system, evident through the funding commitment in early 2021. Over \$5 million has been spent on improving the water infrastructure to improve reliability and efficiency across the distribution system through March.

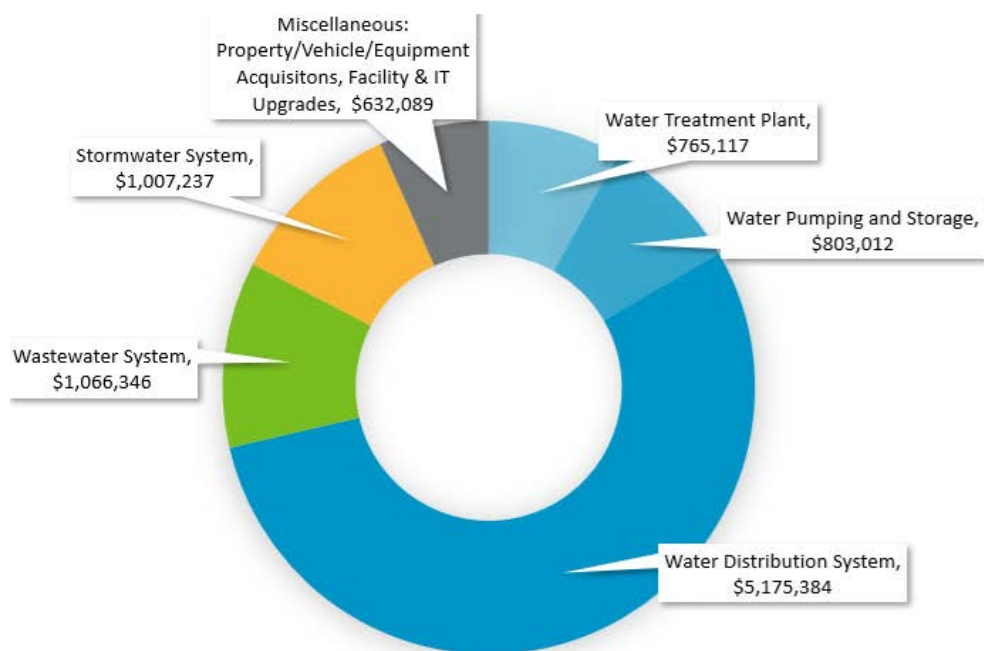
Included in the water system improvements are two Large-Diameter Water Main projects. Transmission mains, referred to as “Rising Mains,” carry large volumes of water from one area of the distribution system to another. The Rising Mains 3 & 4 project aims to improve the water delivery from the Water Treatment Plant to the Highland Reservoirs. Repairs to these pipes will improve water quality and ensure that reliable water service is available to our customers. Also included in the Large-Diameter Water Main Program is the Four Mile Run Large-Diameter Pipe Relocation. This project will relocate a 50-inch water line in accordance with the Four Mile Run site plan design.

With construction season around the corner, surface restoration – repaving streets and sidewalks where we are doing work - also remains a top priority for PWSA. Through

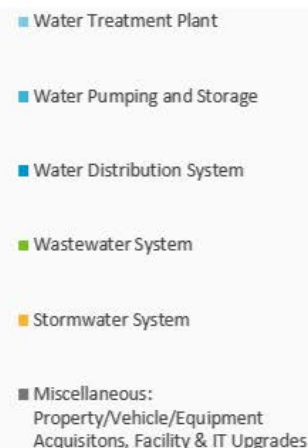
March, we have committed over \$600,000. To date, these efforts include site scouting and completing required administrative documents in advance. It is expected that those efforts will be enhanced and highlighted in the upcoming months through the Capital Improvement Program. The graphic below shows a financial breakdown of capital spending in 2021.



Construction continues on the Rising Mains 3 and 4 Project.



Capital Spending: 3/11/21



Digging Into Development

2021 Developer's Manual Roundtable

Real estate development is a complicated process. PWSA strives to be a good partner in this process by keeping an open communication line with all the region's development entities. To help potential applicants understand how to get water and sewer service, we provide an extensive [Developer's Manual](#). The manual outlines our rules, regulations, and processes. Every year, it is updated to ensure that it includes the latest policies and best practices.

In January 2021, we created an internal working group with our cross-departmental Development Services team (check our [February Digging Into Development](#) article to learn more) to update the 2021 manual. After much deliberation and consideration, we completed the revisions on March 15th. To ensure that the updates addressed some of our development community's most pressing concerns, we held an open invitation Developer's Roundtable event on March 17th.

The event included a brief overview of our proposed changes and solicited feedback from the attendees. Based on the conversations, we will add clarifying language to some sections of the manual and consider making changes to our processes. We want to take this time to thank the participants for the lively discussion. We value your feedback!

Now that the roundtable is completed, we will circulate a draft for review by internal staff. Once approved, we will submit the final draft for approval at the April 23rd Board Meeting. After board approval, we will add the manual and the list of updates to our website.

Do you want to be involved in our next development services event? Send an email to our Development Coordinator, Jordan Treaster, at jtreaster@pgh2o.com to be added to our email list or [visit our events page](#) to see what's coming up!



Pittsburgh has an active development community and we appreciate those who took the time to attend the recent Developer's Roundtable and provide feedback about the updates to our 2021 Developers Manual.

PGH₂O WATER WISE

Stormwater Tip: Prepare for Flood Risks



Did you know that flooding is the most common natural disaster in the United States? Spring rains bring an increased risk of stream and river flooding, street flooding, and sewage backups in Pittsburgh.

Now is the time to prepare in order to protect your family, home, and valuables from flooding:

- Make an emergency plan for your household, including pets, so that you and your family know what to do, where to go, and how to protect yourselves.
- Look up the flood risk for your area or property.
- Purchase or renew a flood insurance policy through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Homeowner's policies do not cover flooding.
- Take photos of your property and do an inventory in case floodwaters damage your property.
- Store important documents and valuables in a safe, dry place.
- Elevate and anchor critical utilities like electrical panels and propane tanks within your property.
- Sign up for or listen for emergency and weather alerts.
- Do not walk, swim, or drive through floodwaters. Turn Around, Don't Drown!

Learn more at pgh2o.com/flood-preparedness.



Water Wise: Can the Grease

Fried foods are a delicious treat, but the fats, oils, and grease (FOGs) that are produced by frying those foods can create serious problems in the sewer system.

FOGs come from foods like cooking oil, meat, butter, dairy products, salad dressings, gravy, mayonnaise, and peanut butter. If these items are poured down kitchen drains, they harden inside household pipes and public sewers, restricting the flow of wastewater. These blockages are a leading cause of sewage backups in buildings, which result in high costs for cleanup and repairs. If FOG buildup gets bad enough, sewage can even overflow into yards, streets, and storm drains, contaminating waterways and causing public health hazards.

Help keep fats, oils, and grease (FOGs) out of the sewer system:

- **Cool It:** Allow FOGs to cool to a safe handling temperature after cooking.
- **Can It:** Pour cooled FOGs into a sealable container, like a jar or can. Store the container in the refrigerator until it is full.
- **Trash It:** Never put FOGs down sink drains or in-sink garbage disposals. Scrape food scraps into the compost or trash. Wipe up FOGs left on pans or dishes with a paper towel then discard in the trash. When your sealed FOG container is full, trash it.

Learn more at pgh2o.com/defend-your-drains.





Customer Assistance Programs

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

For more information about our programs, including the Winter Shut-off Moratorium, Bill Discount, Hardship Grant, and Lead Line Reimbursements, please visit pgh2o.com/CAP or call Dollar Energy Fund at [866.762.2348](tel:866.762.2348).



Do We Have Your Number?

Did you know that we call customers during water emergencies and outages? It is important to 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](tel:412.255.2423) (Press 5)

Or visit our website: pgh2o.com/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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Will Pickering
Chief Executive Officer

Rebecca Zito
Senior Manager of Public Affairs

Julie Ascioia
Industry Relations Manager

Rachel Rampa
Senior Public Affairs Coordinator

Mora McLaughlin
Construction Communications Project Manager

Jordan Treaster
Development Coordinator

Elaine Hinrichs
Education and Outreach Associate

Hali Hetz
Public Affairs Associate

Nick Letzkus
Public Affairs Associate

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Penn Liberty Plaza 1
1200 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Customer Service

T 412.255.2423 (Press 5)

F 412.255.2475
info@pgh2o.com

Emergency Dispatch

412.255.2423 (Press 1)
Available 24/7