

CURRENTS

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Your donation to our Hardship Grant Program will help local families struggling to pay for water services



Pittsburgh is a city rich with the traditions of community, friendliness, and neighborliness, especially during the holiday season. From coat, sweater, and toy drives to nursing home visits to more local and unique Pittsburgh volunteering traditions, our city is one that is full of helpers, with many of us finding a way to support our neighbors and community in need.

Some of our neighbors, though, still struggle to afford their water and wastewater bills. By donating to PWSA's

Hardship Grant Program, you will directly help those eligible customers, who will receive support in the form of financial aid.

Since 2018, the Hardship Grant Program has helped more than 630 Pittsburgh households maintain essential water services. It was established to provide income-eligible customers with annual cash assistance to put towards their monthly water bill. We have currently distributed more than \$165,000 through the program and award an average household grant of \$263.

Grants are dispersed to families with a gross household income that is at or below [150% of the Federal Poverty Level](#). This means that a family of four making \$39,750 would qualify. Households can only receive a grant once every 12 months up to the maximum amount of \$300.

Support your neighbors today by making a tax-deductible contribution to the Hardship Grant. To donate, visit dollarenergy.org/donations/pwsa, call Dollar Energy Fund

COMING UP:

Next Board Meeting:
January 28, 2022

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.

at 412-431-2800 or mail a check to: Dollar Energy Fund, Inc., PO Box 42329, Pittsburgh, PA 15203. Please indicate that your donation is to be directed to PWSA's Hardship Grant Program. Rest assured that 100% of your donation goes directly to PWSA customers in need.

The Hardship Grant Program, like our other Customer Assistance Programs, is administered by Dollar Energy Fund. For more information about the Hardship Grant Program or to donate, please visit Pgh2o.com/give.

DIRECTOR'S CUT

By Chief Executive Officer Will Pickering

Director's Cut: An optimistic outlook for the New Year.



PGH2O Cares team at the Summer Time Bike Drive event in Homewood in June.

December is a time to reflect upon the past while planning for the year ahead. The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority is transforming as an organization with a renewed focus on public health, the environment and being steadfast stewards of the water services our customers rely on each day.

We are entering a new era - one that emphasizes the importance of regulatory compliance for the environment and water quality, strategic investment in our infrastructure, and challenges all employees to meet the ethical standards we have set for the organization. I look towards the New Year with much optimism for providing the water services Pittsburgh expects and deserves.

One of the ways in which we are doing this is with a renewed focus on **ethics and environmental compliance**. As a public water utility, the services we provide directly affect the health and well-being of those we serve. We have developed an environmental compliance program and put in place enhanced ethics training for all employees. These programs, along with an enhanced focus on accountability to the public, are being embraced by employees at all levels of the organization.

We also continue to enhance our **customer assistance programs**. First introduced in 2018, these programs are expanding to assure that water remains accessible for

families that need financial help. With more than 5,000 eligible customers enrolled in our Bill Discount Program and the implementation of our PGH2O Cares teams, our customer assistance programs will continue to provide the assistance many of our customers need.

In 2022, we will introduce new program enhancements to the Bill Discount Program including an 85% discount on the new stormwater fee, an expansion of the Hardship Grant Program to include sewage-only customers, and automatic enrollment for all verified low-income customers into the Winter Shutoff Moratorium. The PGH2O Cares team, established earlier this year, will continue its proactive outreach and education. This group of dedicated PWSA employees is an essential component of our existing customer assistance programs, and we are seeing that their efforts are working to build awareness and increase enrollment.

The approval of our **new stormwater fee** is a notable change for Pittsburgh. It builds equity into our rate structure that wasn't previously there. Historically, we have funded our stormwater services from wastewater rates that are based on water usage. The new stormwater fee is based on the hard or impervious surfaces on a property. This ensures that all property owners in Pittsburgh contribute a share that is proportional to the amount of runoff generated by their property. Establishing a fee that is based on hard surfaces such as roofs, pavement, and asphalt is a widely accepted and more equitable way to charge for stormwater.

With the passage of the federal infrastructure bill in November, we will do all we can to leverage this additional funding to support the massive investment we are making in our infrastructure. The bill includes \$55 billion for water, including money for lead line removal and the types of infrastructure investment already underway at PWSA. I want to assure you that we are going to absolutely make the most of this historic opportunity and we feel that the timing couldn't be better.

We are excited for what the future holds for PWSA and are making every effort to be a better and more reliable community partner. On behalf of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, I wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday!

Going above and beyond!

Superb Cellular Save

In late November, we received a follow-up email from a Highland Park customer whose daughter had accidentally dropped her phone in a storm drain. In her email, she noted the outstanding service of Laborers, Robert Hamilton and Ben Crankshaw, in recovering the phone from the sewer.

"They were kind, funny, and so helpful," wrote the customer. "I hope you will recognize them for this amazing customer service, which helped turn a really rough day into a wonderful, heart-filling experience and a reminder that there are so many good people in this world."

Dispatch Dedication

Dispatcher, Toia Smith received appreciation for quickly and efficiently providing a customer with information about a water main break in Shadyside.

"Toia provided incredible customer service for us tonight," wrote the customer. "Thank you!"

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Respectful Repair

We recently received a complimentary email from a North Oakland customer who reached out to thank Operations Manager, Bob White; Water Service Foreman, Curt O'Connor; Utility Workers, Dean Harmon, Anthony Ranallo, Sean McHenry, and Connor McGinnis; Truck Drivers, Mike Kovacic and Hank Hayden; Heavy Equipment Operator, Joe Kasel; and Valve and Hydrant Specialist, Brian Schact for their work on a water main repair in the neighborhood.

"I want to commend the employees who, after a very long workday, were professional, courteous, and helpful," wrote the customer. "I am grateful that you are employing people who are both competent and courteous in dealing with the public."

PWSA Attends Utility and Technology Career Fair, Promoting Skilled Job Opportunities and Training



PWSA Talent Acquisition Specialist, Sarah Collins, (center) joined by PBEOC members Representative Jake Wheatley (left) and Pittsburgh Mayor-Elect Ed Gainey (right) at the Utility and Technology Community Career Fair.

The Pittsburgh Black Elected Officials Coalition (PBEOC), a partnership between city, county, and state officials, hosted a Utility and Technology Community Career Fair on December 7th to promote and encourage interest in utility and technology jobs in the region. This important event provides a forum for companies to recruit and share information on jobs and training that is available for workers of all levels. The PBEOC envisions a healthy, thriving, sustainable African American community where residents live, work, play, and worship safely and successfully. PWSA is grateful for the opportunity to participate and bring awareness to the many career possibilities available, which offer excellent pay, training, and benefits.

For more information on career opportunities at PWSA, visit [Pgh2o.com/careers](https://pgh2o.com/careers).



PRESS RELEASES

Help Support Your Neighbors This Holiday Season, December 1

PWSA Announces Approval of New Rate Structure Including Stormwater Fee, November 18

Employee Spotlight: Joe Tewell, Deputy Director of Operations



In his role, Joe oversees teams of PWSA Field Operations crews. Above, crews operate a water valve to complete water main repair work.

Give us a brief description of your responsibilities at PWSA.

In my role, I lead a team of Field Operations Senior Managers who are responsible for managing crews and schedules to respond to issues in the field, including water main breaks, restoration issues, and other emergencies or customer complaints. There's a lot of communication that goes into this and I work closely with other PWSA teams, including Water

Production and Public Affairs for instance, to ensure we're prioritizing our field work and resolving field and customer issues.

When did you join PWSA? What made the Authority an attractive career for you?

I joined PWSA in 2019 as Senior Manager of Field Operations at Brilliant Yard. I've made so much of my career in the field, and prior to that I spent about 10 years at the Pennsylvania-American Water. There I held a variety of roles, working my way up from Meter Technician to supervisor positions.

I chose to join the Authority because I was looking for an organization I could grow with and I knew PWSA was ramping up their hiring efforts. I was also attracted to PWSA's focus on their water department and quality and by the visionary mindset of our leadership team.

What impact do you hope to have at the Authority?

PWSA is growing our workforce at a tremendous pace and that requires

a lot of new hire training. I've really enjoyed this aspect of the work – I get to pass on my knowledge and expertise so these individuals can start their own careers.

Any crazy stories from working in the field?

In the field you're sometimes seeing customers on a rough day. I remember one time I arrived at a customer's house to find water running from the owner's front door and coming out their back door. In those situations, what you really want to do is explain to the customer what's happening and how you're going to fix it. It requires lots of communication, and some education as well.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I'm a big sports fan and, for the past seven years or so, I've enjoyed coaching my son's baseball team. I also like spending time with my family and high school friends, many of whom are still in the area (I'm a lifelong Pittsburgher!).

Interested in working at PWSA?

We are looking for dedicated and talented people to join our team! Visit [Pgh2o.com/careers](https://pgh2o.com/careers)

New Hires

WELCOME ABOARD!

Ronald Bassler, Utility Worker I

Jason Pawlos, Welder

Jacob Visokey, Utility Worker I

Connor Wege, Human Resources Assistant

Promotions

CONGRATULATIONS!

Derek Forrester, Truck Driver

Frank Sidari, Chief Environmental Compliance & Ethics Officer

Ryan Sullivan, Inventory Specialist II

2022 Infrastructure Investments

As part of our continuous efforts to upgrade aging infrastructure and implement innovative stormwater solutions, PWSA will invest approximately \$181 million in capital improvements in 2022. This will be the largest annual capital outlay in our history and a nearly 56 percent increase from 2021's forecasted total. These projects will provide the quality drinking water, sewer conveyance, and stormwater management services that Pittsburgh expects and deserves.

All PWSA capital investment is designed with the organizational goals of resiliency and redundancy in the water system, reliable sewer service, and smart stormwater management.

In addition to targeted lead service line replacement projects, we plan to replace approximately 10 miles of water mains and 1,200 service lines across the city through the

Water Main Replacement Program in 2022. Among other sewer projects, we will invest approximately \$30 million in small and large diameter sewer rehabilitation, using lining and other methods to restore structural integrity in our pipes.

We are planning to renovate several parks with rain gardens and underground stormwater storage tanks to control the flow of rainwater and regrade two ballfields at Volunteers Field in Carrick to reduce field flooding and erosion.

As a publicly owned and operated utility, every dollar we receive from ratepayers is reinvested to improve water, sewer, and stormwater services. As these projects are completed, our customers, Pittsburgh, and the region will benefit from having a system that is built to meet the demands that today's population and economy places on a modern water utility.

Projects Moving into Construction Next Year

In addition to current construction projects that will continue next year, our staff is hard at work this winter preparing to break ground on even more water, sewer, and stormwater improvement projects throughout 2022. These upcoming construction projects include:

- Small Diameter Water Main Replacement
- Lanpher Rising Main
- Small & Large Sewer Rehab Program
- Queenston Sewer Improvement Project
- Sewers Under Structures Project
- Lawn and Ophelia Stormwater Project
- Volunteers Field Stormwater Project: Ballfield Regrading
- Martin Luther King Jr./Warren K. Branch Park Stormwater Project
- South Side Park Stormwater Project



Crews install new service lines during a water main replacement in South Side Slopes.

**To learn more about our upcoming projects, please visit
Pgh2o.com/projects-in-planning.**

2021 Capital Spending

Through the end of 2021, PWSA's commitment to investment remains strong.



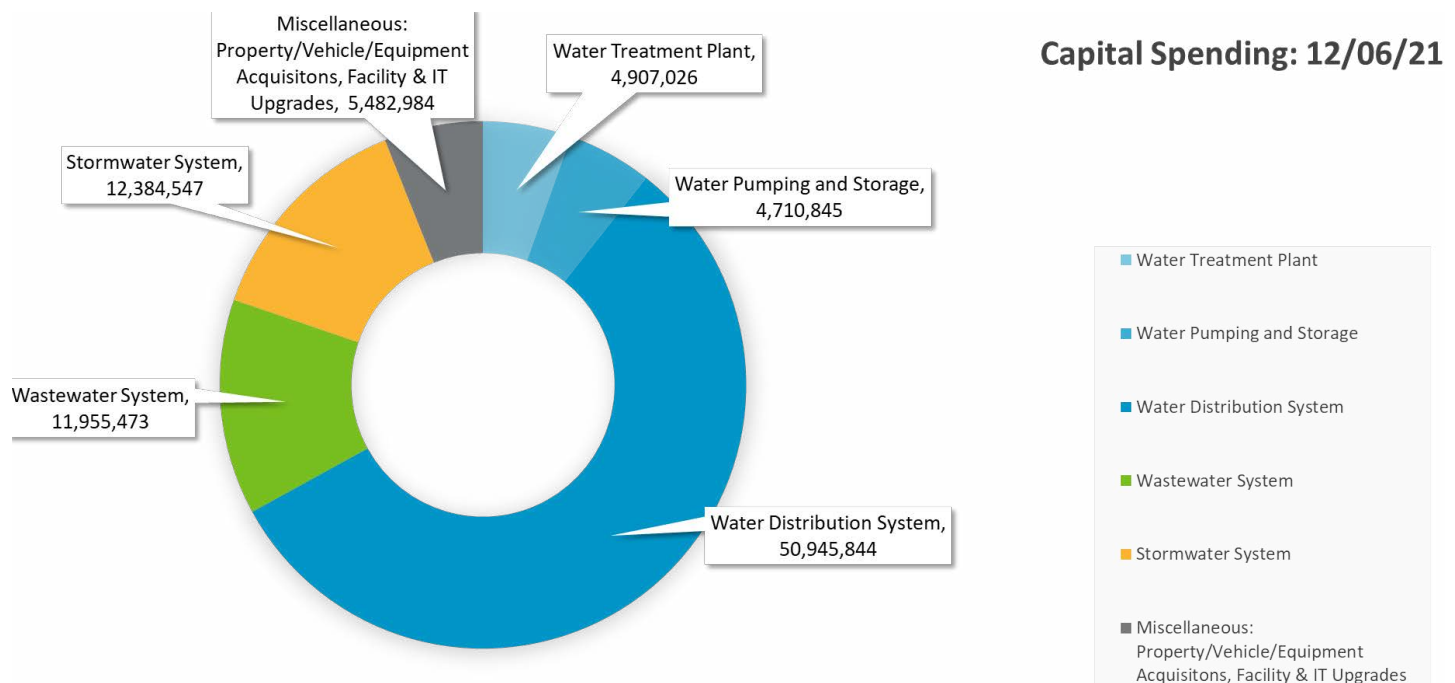
PWSA crews uncover a water main in the Strip District.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority has invested over \$90 million in our Capital Improvement Program this year and continues to invest in our water distribution and wastewater systems by proactively identifying areas for improvement.

The 2020 Small Diameter Water Main Replacement continues to be our highest-funded water program this year, with over \$30 million spent through the end of November. PWSA strategically determines these small diameter pipe replacement projects by reviewing data on the age and leak history of a pipe. Ongoing initiatives within our water program focus on lead service line replacements, large diameter water main improvements, and the water relay program, among many others. The Fifth and Forbes Water Main Replacement Project is an ongoing project that, once completed, will completely rehabilitate the water mains in the Central Business District and Uptown. This project aims to replace over two miles of water mains, improve the condition and reliability of the water infrastructure, and replace lead lines for customers.

We are also making needed improvements to our sewer system. Several projects, including the Small Diameter Pipes, Large Diameter Pipes, and Sewers Under Structures, aim to replace or rehabilitate miles of sewer lines with previous issues or that have the possibility of future failure. Continually updating and improving our sewer infrastructure, ensures that we can improve the reliability of our sewer system for years to come.

The Capital Spending graphic below shows a financial breakdown through 2021.



PGH₂O WATER WISE

Keep Ice at Bay with Environmentally Friendly Methods



De-icing salts applied to roads or sidewalks lower the freezing point of water on the pavement, which melts or prevents the formation of ice. De-icing salts can improve safety, but they also contain chemicals like chloride that can damage nearby plants, soils, and infrastructure. When these chemicals are carried away by melting ice or snow to our rivers and streams, they can harm the water quality and wildlife. Just one teaspoon of salt can pollute five gallons of water!

Follow these tips when de-icing to help reduce pollution:

- Before salting, clear away as much snow and ice as possible with a shovel or broom.
- Apply salt sparingly on icy patches, leaving about three inches between salt grains. Focus on areas with high foot traffic.
- If there is salt left on the pavement after thaws, sweep it up and apply less next time.
- Minimize use of sodium chloride (also known as rock salt), calcium chloride, and potassium chloride because they release high amounts of chloride when dissolved in water. Instead, consider using magnesium chloride products, which release less chloride.
- To help reduce salt use, consider mixing in additives like beet juice or pickle juice.
- To increase traction, sprinkle sand with or without salt. Sweep up the sand later so that it does not clog storm drains or pollute rivers and streams.

Learn more at

Pgh2o.com/reducing-stormwater-pollution.



Protect Your Pipes!

Harsh winter temperatures can cause your pipes to freeze or even break. Water expands when it freezes, which places a tremendous amount of pressure on your plumbing system.



Follow these simple steps to protect your pipes this winter:

- Check frequently to make sure pipes are not frozen by opening and turning on taps in your home. Allow water to drip slightly from your faucets if your pipes tend to freeze.
- Insulate pipes, faucets, and water meters in cold areas of your home. If you have pipes in the attic, an unheated garage, or crawl space under the house, wrap pipes before temperatures drop.
- Seal off access doors, air vents, and cracks. Winter air that enters a home through any opening can quickly freeze exposed water pipes.
- Before temperatures drop, remove, drain, and store outside garden hoses. Close the internal valves that control the water supply to the outside hose spigot. Then, open the outside hose spigot to allow any remaining water to drain.
- If leaving your home for an extended period, consider closing your main water shut-off valve and draining the system by opening all faucets and flushing the toilets. To shut off individual fixtures, check for valves under sinks and behind toilets. You can also call us at 412-255-2423 to have us shut water service at the curb to avoid a minimum monthly charge.

Learn more at

Pgh2o.com/protecting-your-pipes.



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, Flexible Payment Plans, Hardship Grant, and Lead Line Reimbursements, please visit Pgh2o.com/CAP or call Dollar Energy Fund at [866.762.2348](tel:866.762.2348).

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Donate to the Hardship Grant Program online at Pgh2o.com/give.

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)

Visit our website: Pgh2o.com/update-contact-info

Enroll in eBilling

Convenient and easy to use, our online billing and payment portal ensures timely delivery of bills and payments.

Visit Pgh2o.com/ebilling to enroll.

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