

Loss of or Negative Water Pressure

Power Failures and other events

Municipal water systems may not be able to maintain water pressure following an extended power failure, a main break, equipment failure, or during fire fighting activities for a large fire. In such cases water may become contaminate through backflow, back siphonage, or leakage into the system.

During a power failure

Minimize the use of water to help prevent the loss of pressure. If there is no significant loss of pressure it is safe to immediately resume all uses of the water system.

If there is a significant loss of pressure in your water system

- Assume the water may not be safe to drink
- Use an alternative supply of drinking water or bring your water to a rapid rolling boil for one minute before use (see fact sheet for Boil Water Advisories)
- Follow any instructions issued by the water facility operator or Public Health

Following Restoration of Pressure

Once the water pressure has been restored the system will be tested for bacterial contamination and adequate levels of disinfection throughout the water system. This process takes a minimum of three days to complete.

It is recommended you take the following precautions in your home for three days once pressure is restored, unless the Health Unit advises otherwise:

- When the pressure returns run the water until it feels noticeably cool. Then run for another 3-5 minutes (to flush the plumbing in your home).
- Remove, rinse and replace any screen on the tap on all faucets
- Use an alternative supply of drinking water or bring your drinking water to a rapid, rolling boil for one minute before use. The precaution applies to water for drinking, cooking and oral hygiene (see fact sheet for Boil Water Advisories).
- Other household uses of water such as cleaning, clothes washing, dishwashing and bathing can commence immediately after the return of water pressure.
- If you have a water softener, or other water treatment, attached to the cold water supply line you should consider additional flushing. Ask your supplier for appropriate directions.

Please see the fact sheet for Boil Water Advisories for further information.

References: Produced in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ontario Clean Water Agency.