

# CLEARING WATER LINES IN UNOCCUPIED BUILDINGS FACT SHEET

Clearing the water lines, known as flushing, can be done by running the tap water for an extended period in the building. The goal is to turn over the water left in the pipes with fresh, clean water from the public water main. This process will clear the stagnant water when reactivating dormant plumbing systems and ensure the water in the building is safe as well as taste and odor free before the resumption of normal water use.

## POINTS OF USE TO CONSIDER

- Sinks
- Toilets
- Water heaters
- Hot tub
- Showerheads
- Water fountains
- Water features

## FLUSHING 101

1. Flush your water system
  - Flush hot and cold water through all points of use (e.g., showers, sink faucets)
  - Flushing may need to occur in segments (e.g., floors or individual rooms) due to facility size and water pressure. The purpose of building flushing is to replace all water inside building piping with fresh water.
  - Flush until the hot water reaches its maximum temperature
2. Ensure your water heater is properly maintained and the temperature is correctly set
  - Determine if your manufacturer recommends draining the water heater after a prolonged period of disuse. Ensure that all maintenance activities are carried out according to the manufacturer's instructions or by professionals.
  - Make sure that your water heater is set to at least 120°F
  - Higher temperatures can further reduce the risk of contaminated water, but ensure that you take measures to prevent scalding if your water heater is set to >130°F
3. Ensure hot tubs/spas are safe for use
  - Check for existing guidelines from your local or state regulatory agency before use
  - Ensure that hot tubs/spas are free of visible slime or biofilm before filling with water
4. Ensure cooling towers are clean and well-maintained
  - Ensure that the tower and basin are free of visible slime or biofilm before use
5. Ensure safety equipment including fire sprinkler systems, eye wash stations, and safety showers are clean and well-maintained
6. Replace all point-of-use filters, including the filter in refrigerators
7. Clean all decorative water features, such as fountains

## RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### *CDC Guidance/Building Types at Risk*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>

### *CDC Interactive Risk Assessment*

<https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/wmp/toolkit/wmp-risk.html>

### *AWWA Return to Service Guidance/Flushing Guidance*

<https://www.awwa.org/Resources-Tools/Resource-Topics/Coronavirus#10681543-shutoffs-and-return-to-service-guidance>