

## **PSA: Water Quality and Your Business**

### **Ensure Your Premise Plumbing and Devices are Safe to Use as you Re-open**

#### **Covid-19 Building Flushing Guidance**

As buildings have been shut down or used infrequently, building water quality degradation becomes a serious issue. This document is meant as a starting point to bring focus to the issue of water quality degradation in building plumbing when it is not used, or water use is significantly reduced. This is a general road map for how to flush contaminants from the building and get the premise plumbing system back to pre-stagnation conditions. Each building is unique though, and flushing will need to be adjusted accordingly. The Brown Deer Water Utility is relaying guidelines from the CDC for reinstating plumbing systems which have been stagnant to provide customers with the freshest water possible.

#### **What happened in my premise plumbing while the building was out of use?**

The premise plumbing begins at the shut off valve located within the public right of way. Any plumbing after this point is the responsibility of the building and property owner. The building system includes all plumbing, storage and fixtures to each point of use in the building.

Disinfectant present in the public water system may quickly dissipate from stagnant water inside of an unused building. This can leave plumbing vulnerable to the growth of biofilm bacterial and potential pathogens such as Legionella. A decrease in hot water temperature to 77-108°F may allow the growth of Legionella. When water is stagnant, there is also the potential that heavy metals and pathogens may build up in the pipes.

Four of the most important factors affecting water quality in building plumbing is sediment, temperature, age, and residual. To optimize premise plumbing water quality:

- Keep cold water cold and hot water hot
- Flush to waste any rusty, discolored or smelly water
- Reduce water age with periodic flushing (this replaces all water inside the building with fresh water)
- Flush pipes to refresh the water supply and restore an adequate disinfectant residual

#### **How can I flush my buildings water system?**

The following steps should be taken to prepare a plumbing system prior to reopening a building to customers:

1. Start at the lowest level in the building – including the basement. Remove any screens and aerators from all faucets on this floor. An aerator is located at the end of the faucet and includes a screen. A pliers or jar opener may be needed.
2. Completely open all faucets on the lowest level (run only cold water).
3. While keeping the lowest level faucets running, move to the next floor in the building and repeat the process of removing screens/aerators. Follow this by completely opening all faucets.
4. Repeat the same procedure for any additional floors.
5. Once the top floor in the building is reached and all faucets are open, continue running all faucets for 10 minutes.
6. After 10 minutes, turn off all faucets starting at the top floor and work down to the lowest level in the building.
7. Run all faucets with hot water until water temperature at each fixture reaches is maximum temperature.
8. Rinse and reattach any screen and aerators that were removed.

Additional information regarding these guidelines can be found on the CDC's website at:

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