

Fire Hydrant Flow Testing Frequently Asked Questions

Each May, the Birmingham Fire Department conducts annual flow testing of city hydrants throughout the month.

The Fire Department flows about a third of the City's hydrants each year. The testing provides the department with the flow pressure and volume of water from each hydrant. Additionally, it reveals hydrants with mechanical problems. Flow testing is one of the ways the department uses to ensure hydrants are operable and give the proper water flow during an emergency.

The Fire Department conducts flow testing Monday through Thursday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. We do not flow test on Friday, Saturday or Sunday. Prior to and during flow testing in your area, red signs will be placed along streets indicating if further information needed go to: www.bhamgov.org/hydrants

Here are responses to frequently asked questions in regard to hydrant flow testing:

What Is The Value To The Community To Have Hydrants Flowed?

The Fire Department is able to determine proper operations of valves, visible and audible leaks, water pressure, flow of gallons per minute and ability to flush out sediment in the main. This practice not only extends the life of our water mains but improves water quality.

Why Is The Water Pressure Low?

Your water pressure may be reduced while hydrants in the area are flowed but will never stop. The pressure will return quickly.

Why Does My Water Look Discolored After Hydrant Flushing?

During the flushing process, it is not uncommon for a yellow, brown or reddish tint to appear in the water. Harmless mineral deposits settle in the water mains and flushing the fire hydrants stirs the deposits sometimes causing discoloration of the water.

Is The Discolored Water A Similar Situation To What Is Happening In Flint?

Absolutely not.

Is The Discolored Water Safe To Drink?

Yes. Even though the water may be discolored it is safe to drink. Compounds such as iron, manganese and other sediments make it discolored, but they do not have health effects. Although the water may not be visually appealing, it is safe to drink and continues to meet all federal and state drinking water standards. There is no health hazard associated with the discolored water.

How Do I Get My Water Clear?

Most people prefer to drink clear water, to do this wait approximately one hour after the hydrant flushing has been discontinued in your area. Turn only cold water faucets on, preferably bathtubs or showers due to the larger volume, and let run for five minutes or until the water becomes clear.

My Clothes Became Stained While Doing Laundry, Is This Permanent?

No. You may purchase Oxalic Acid or commercial products for taking rust out of clothes from a local drug or hardware store. The clothes can be re-washed following the instructions and the rust will be removed.



The map below indicates areas where flow testing will occur each year. For more information regarding fire hydrant flow testing, visit www.bhamgov.org/hydrants or call the Birmingham Fire Department at (248) 530-1900.

