



Orange Water and Sewer Authority

*A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services
to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community.*

WHY DO WE RELEASE WATER FROM FIRE HYDRANTS AND VALVES?

(The possible reasons for the “flushing” of our water pipes.)

- In some places in our water system, water use is low and water may stay in the pipes longer than desired. We therefore periodically release water from hydrants and/or valves to bring fresh water into the pipes.
- When water remains in a pipe for several days, the water may develop some taste and odor or the level of disinfectants (chlorine and ammonia) in the water may be reduced.
- In order to protect the public health, we need to keep the level of chlorine and ammonia in the proper range (two to four parts per million) in accord with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. One part per million is like a penny in \$10,000.
- We flush our water pipes to remove tiny particles of iron, manganese and other minerals that accumulate in our pipes over time. (These minerals are normally present in water from our lakes.) Some mineral particles are so small (a few millionths of a meter) that they are not removed when we filter our drinking water. The minerals are not harmful but they can discolor our water. We flush our water pipe system every 2 to 3 years.
- Under some conditions, iron, manganese, etc. that have settled to the bottom of our pipes may be stirred up and discolor our water. Flushing our water pipes clears up the water. The conditions that may cause discoloration of our water include maintenance and repairs, and changes in the normal direction of water flow because of a significant water leak or firefighting.
- When we do repairs or other maintenance work on our water system, air may get into the water. Air bubbles may give our water a milky appearance. We flush our pipes to remove the air bubbles and clear up the water.
- We also flush our water pipes before testing new lines and after repairs to a water main.
- FOR MORE INFORMATION: Thurman Green, Manager of Distribution and Collection Systems, 537-4224 or tgreen@owasa.org; or Greg Feller, Public Affairs, 537-4267 or gfeller@owasa.org.