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Have you ever wondered why the city opens fire hydrants?

Have you seen city staff opening valves or fire hydrants to flush water from the distribution system? This common practice is necessary in maintaining water age, considering the distance potable drinking water has to travel from the treatment plants to the customer's tap.

Another reason Glendale flushes lines is to manage chlorine disinfection byproducts. In 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency established a rule that provides for greater protection from these normal byproducts of water treatment. One tool to manage this issue is flushing the public water system to keep the water moving, thus reducing the amount of time it stays in the pipes.

The American Water Works Association has standards that guide proper flushing techniques, and Glendale adheres to all elements of the standards.

The City uses both conventional and continuous flushing:

Conventional flushing typically involves opening fire hydrants in an area of the distribution system until certain water quality goals are met. Conventional flushing can be effectively used to restore chlorine levels and to maintain high quality water for a specific area of the distribution system. **Continuous flushing** at dedicated flushing stations is used by water systems to address re-occurring water circulation problems. Typically, velocities at continuous flushing stations are much lower than seen during conventional flushing.

Water from flushing stations finds its way into the sewer system where it then helps to clean the sewer pipes and maintains a good flow through the sewers. This flow is then treated and reclaimed for other uses, such as turf irrigation and developing water credits for future use. The benefit of water system flushing is that it uses a minimal amount of water. It's a proactive and essential component of preventive maintenance, allowing crews to assess the condition of the distribution system and fire hydrants during the process.

While a loss of water pressure may happen during the hydrant flushing method, the process doesn't typically interrupt water service. In addition, cloudy water may occur. Though not harmful, this water may stain laundry. If this occurs, wait until the nearby flushing is completed, remove faucet aerators or filters and let the COLD water faucet run until the water clears. This water can still be used on plants and landscaping.

The next time you see a City worker flushing a hydrant, please know they are working hard to protect the safety of the public, improve water quality, and properly maintain the water distribution system. If you see a Glendale water crew flushing hydrants in your area, please drive carefully.

If you want to learn more about how Glendale Water Services maintains water quality, please call us at (623) 930-4100.

