

# WHAT'S ON TAP



NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS • WINTER ISSUE



## Students get close to the action with DC Water's environmental education

DC Water is reaching more District students than ever with water education programs. Students might watch a remote-controlled robot inspecting a sewer pipe or stand front row while a giant claw scrapes masses of smelly debris from a storm drain. These hands-on activities are just some of the ways that DC Water brings students outside their classrooms to learn about water in exciting and meaningful ways.

"We have expanded DC Water's education outreach from unrelated single-class or single-school deliveries to a robust curriculum that reaches thousands of children and teenagers," says Torri Epperson, who heads up Education Outreach at DC Water.

Epperson has expanded collaborations with like-minded organizations—environmental, youth and civic—to deliver a unified program that is far-reaching, more substantive and practical than previous education outreach. "By partnering with others, we are able to impact greater numbers of students in our service area," she says. "At DC Water, we are committed to providing information and educational experiences that will lead to a healthier environment and healthier communities. And we hope to inspire students and families to recognize the role they play in our environment and how they can act to protect it. We also hope to inspire the next generation of public servants and civil engineers through our STEM programs."

DC Water is now partnering with DC Public Schools to develop curricula for water education. One of the Authority's most recent collaborations, with an organization called **Engineering Tomorrow**, delivers career and technical workshops to high school students interested in math and science and those enrolled in Engineering Academies.

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## CEO's Message

You don't usually think about your water service until there's a problem - a broken pipe, an outage, a traffic disruption - but it takes an incredible system of pipes, valves, pumps and people to keep things running smoothly.



Older cities like Washington, DC have aging infrastructure in need of replacement or repairs, and additional issues such as combined sewer overflows that pollute waterways. The cost requirements for needed capital improvements are substantial.

At the same time, regulations are becoming ever more stringent. After we spent nearly \$1 billion in upgrades at the wastewater treatment plant a decade ago, we were mandated to undertake another environmental program—the Clean Rivers Project—that now carries a \$2.7 billion price tag.

Add in the rollout of the most ambitious lead pipe removal program in District history and the complexities of emerging contaminants, and you can understand our challenge. The costs are great and choices difficult. If we don't generate enough revenue, we cannot meet these obligations. But rising rates place ever heavier burdens on our customers.

The budget and rate process follows a two-year cycle. Rates are based on a study of the actual costs of providing services. Our management team makes recommendations to our Board which ultimately presents a proposal for public comment.

I will once again host public meetings across the District during Town Halls this spring. A schedule will be available online at [dcwater.com/rates](https://dcwater.com/rates). Please plan to attend, we want to hear from you.

**David L. Gadis**, CEO  
ceosuggestions@dcwater.com

# The scent of safe water

## You may notice a slight change in the taste and smell of tap water

For most of the year, water is captured from the Potomac River and made safe for drinking using a disinfectant called chloramine, a combination of chlorine and ammonia. Chloramine is a persistent disinfectant, meaning it is long-lasting, keeping water clean and safe through our 1,500-mile pipe distribution system all the way to your tap.

Each spring, chloramine is temporarily switched to free chlorine, and our crews flush (run water through) hydrants throughout the city. This standard annual practice freshens our pipes so we can deliver the

best quality water—a bit of *spring cleaning* ensures the most refreshing glass of tap possible during those *hot summer months*.

From March 23 to May 4, you may notice a stronger scent of chlorine coming from your tap water. Chlorine levels will remain at standard, safe levels during this time. There are steps you can take to lessen the temporary change in scent and taste:

- Run the cold water tap for two minutes. Run it for five to 10 minutes after water has not been used for several hours.
- Refrigerate cold tap water in an open pitcher. Within a few hours, the chlorine taste and odor will disappear.
- Some filters may reduce the chlorine taste and smell. DC Water recommends using devices that are installed at your faucet tap or pitcher-style filters. Use a filter certified to meet NSF standards and replace the filter as recommended by the manufacturer.



\*Don't forget to unscrew and clean your faucet aerator every three months and to replace older aerators annually.

*Individuals with special health concerns should consult a health care provider on the use of tap water.*

For more information, visit [dcwater.com/chlorine-switch](http://dcwater.com/chlorine-switch), or call the Drinking Water Division at (202)-612-3440. For bilingual guides and tips to improve the taste and quality of tap water at home, visit [dcwater.com/water-quality-home](http://dcwater.com/water-quality-home).

## Environmental education *continued*

Teachers can still bring classes to tour DC Water facilities, and classroom delivery is also an option. Ms. Epperson has supplemented these offerings by creating downloadable resources for teachers such as environmental lessons and an updated children's activity book, and brought real-world STEM experiences to local schools.

In addition to its K-12 classroom outreach, DC Water educates the public through mass media, including work with graduate, undergraduate and high school teams producing environmental documentaries that air on stations such as Maryland Public Television.

Free lessons and additional information are available at: [dcwater.com/environmental-education](http://dcwater.com/environmental-education). Expanded online offerings will be available later in 2020.

## Financial Assistance Programs Extended for 2020

It is easy to apply and you could save up to \$800 annually on your water bills. To apply or learn more about these programs, visit [dcwater.com/customer-assistance](http://dcwater.com/customer-assistance) or call 311.

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY  
Customer Service Department • (202) 354-3600  
1385 Canal Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003 • [dcwater.com](http://dcwater.com)



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