

# WHAT'S ON TAP



NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS • WINTER ISSUE

## Wendy the Waterdrop makes debut in children's book



Adding to its ever-expanding educational programs, DC Water published a children's book describing the process of treating the water we all use daily and returning it to the environment.



Entitled, **Wendy, Where Does Our Wastewater Go?** this brightly colored and easy-to-read book makes complex information accessible to children ages 6 to 12. "Our goal was to challenge kids to think about their place in the environment and how we can all better steward the communities in which we live," says Torri Epperson, DC Water's Education Outreach Coordinator, who wrote the story.

The new book retails for \$14.99 and is available at [bluedrop.co/shop/](https://bluedrop.co/shop/) and at select bookstores across the District. Additional free copies will be provided to local charities and classrooms within the service area and 10 percent of all sales will be donated to DC Water's SPLASH program that helps customers in financial need keep their water flowing.

## Scientists trace disease through sewage

Scientists seeking to find early indicators of coronavirus hotspots have enlisted the help of wastewater treatment agencies across the country. DC Water joined the Health and Human Services study that tests wastewater samples to detect the virus.

Fragments of the virus appear in wastewater before the case numbers spike. Those who are infected but asymptomatic don't feel sick and generally don't get tested, but the virus will still be present in their stool. Studying the wastewater can predict spikes in infections one to two weeks before they are diagnosed and reported.

...continued

## CEO's Message

I know I was not alone in wishing goodbye to 2020 and ushering in 2021.

The year 2020 tested our strength, our faith and our resolve. The pandemic changed our lives in almost every way. I have been humbled by front-line heroes everywhere and proud of our heroes at DC Water who continue to operate in the field, in the office and remotely. We strive to work safely while still providing critical services to the District and the region.



We are mindful of the devastating effects on the economy and our customers and have taken aggressive measures to assist those affected by the pandemic. With aid from the DC Water Board of Directors and the District, we expanded our emergency financial assistance program. If you have been impacted and need assistance, please see the ad in this issue for more information. We are working on even more assistance programs for 2021.

We also upgraded several customer service features, making it easier for customers to set up payment plans. Read more in this issue.

There is hope on the horizon in the form of vaccines. But if you are behind on your water bill, please contact us so we can help. Take care and may we all stay safe and well in 2021.

**David L. Gadis**, CEO  
[ceosuggestions@dcwater.com](mailto:ceosuggestions@dcwater.com)

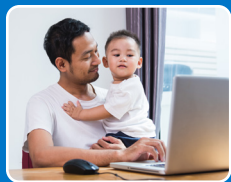
## Annual pipe cleaning begins this spring

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

It is time once again to temporarily switch the drinking water disinfectant. This standard annual practice freshens our pipes so we can deliver the best quality water. The switch generally takes place from late March to early May.

For most of the year, the Washington Aqueduct uses a long-lasting disinfectant called chloramine, a combination of chlorine and ammonia. This keeps water clean through DC Water's 1,350-mile distribution system all the way to your tap. Each spring, chloramine is temporarily switched to free chlorine, and our crews run water through hydrants throughout the city to pull the disinfectant through the system. Chlorine levels are continually monitored for safety.

For tips to lessen the temporary change in scent and taste, please visit [dcwater.com/chlorine-switch](http://dcwater.com/chlorine-switch), or call DC Water's Drinking Water Division at (202)-612-3440. For bilingual guides and tips for improving the taste and quality of tap water at home, visit [dcwater.com/waterquality-home](http://dcwater.com/waterquality-home).



## Times are tough. Let us help.

District residents can apply to get their current and past due water bills paid from emergency funding. If your annual household income is below \$126,000, or if you lost income due to the pandemic, we encourage you to apply.



call: 311 or (202) 350-9649  
email: [criac.residential@dc.gov](mailto:criac.residential@dc.gov)  
website: [doee.dc.gov/service/criac](http://doee.dc.gov/service/criac)

## New Year, new features

### DC Water's revolutionary HUNA alert gets even smarter

The original app, developed by DC Water, alerted residents when their water usage spiked for four consecutive days. This was often the first indication of a leak, pipe break or plumbing problem. The new app monitors for non-stop usage. Using the logic that a leak or burst pipe will cause continuous water flow, the new app alerts even sooner. You don't need to wait several days to see that something is amiss. Customers can select the threshold—6, 12 or 24 consecutive hours. Please ensure your email and phone numbers are accurate in order to receive the alerts. Visit [dcwater.com/consecutive-usage-alerts](http://dcwater.com/consecutive-usage-alerts).

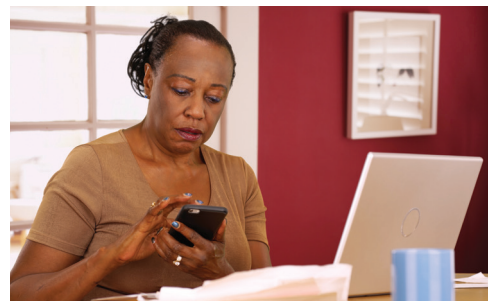
### IVR upgrades

Added convenience—now you can contact DC Water for even more needs, day or night, through an enhanced automated phone system. Haven't gotten a bill lately? Call in and generate one. Get information on permit applications or contact other agencies for programs like financial assistance. The phone system can generate an email, with your

account number, to the appropriate department. Call (202) 354-3600. The menu has changed, so please listen carefully to the new prompts.

### Payment plans on mydcwater.com

Money tight? Need more time to pay your water bill? Keep your DC Water account in good standing by signing up for a flexible payment plan. DC Water already offered installment plans by speaking with a Customer Care Associate. Now there are even more options—you can set up a payment plan on the mydcwater.com portal, and by phone, using the automated system at (202) 354-3600. Visit [mydcwater.com](http://mydcwater.com) to register for the portal if you have not already signed up.



## Scientists trace disease through sewage *continued*

Earlier identification of hotspots allows officials to apply measures to mitigate spread. Currently, the geographic areas studied are quite large, but as the process is refined, the hope is that agencies can collect samples along the sewer distribution system so that protective actions can be instituted at micro levels rather

than region-wide, state-wide or District-wide.

The long-term implications for the public health community may be even more exciting. By developing the protocols and refining the science now, these methods can be used for future disease outbreaks here and abroad.



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