



# WHEN MAIN BREAKS OCCUR WE'RE ON IT

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you suspect that a main break or leak has occurred in your neighborhood, please contact us at 1-866-430-0820 so we can investigate!



## QUESTIONS?

We can be reached at our  
Customer Service Center:  
1-866-430-0820

Hours: 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

For emergencies,  
we're available 24/7.

**When main breaks occur, our crews work around the clock in all types of weather to make the needed repairs and restore service as quickly as possible.**

### WHAT IS MISSOURI AMERICAN WATER DOING TO PREVENT MAIN BREAKS?

- We have an ongoing infrastructure replacement program where we look at aging water mains, changing fire flow requirements, water quality and maintenance history. In 2018, we invested nearly \$200 million in our water infrastructure and replaced more than 50 miles of water main statewide. Even as we make these investments, our tap water costs about a penny a gallon – an exceptional value!

### WHAT CAUSES WATER MAINS TO BREAK?

- Main breaks can occur for a few reasons. In the winter, the water we treat can sometimes drop to near-freezing temperatures. Such cold water flowing through old infrastructure can cause that infrastructure to contract and break in weak spots. Also, while our pipes are installed below the frost line, freezing and thawing of soil creates movement. This can sometimes leave a water main unsupported and lead to a break. In addition, when the soil shrinks or swells, it puts tension on water pipes and can lead to a break.
- Winter main break season typically starts sometime after the first extended cold snap, often in December or January. When you can see ice floating on the surface of nearby rivers, that water is cold and main breaks are more likely!
- In the summer, because of higher demand, water in the mains must be pumped under higher pressure in order to reach the far ends of our distribution system, which can sometimes be many miles from the treatment plant. Water under pressure can find weak spots in aging infrastructure and lead to a break. In addition, as in winter, soil movement can leave mains unsupported. Like in winter, summer main break season begins as the temperature climbs. More people want to water their lawn, fill swimming pools and otherwise use more water. We're forced to pump more, and mains sometimes can't handle the pressure.



## HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO REPAIR?

- The time it takes ultimately depends on a number of factors, including:
  - » Length of time for Missouri One Call (811) to arrive. By law, we must call 811 to request professional locators to mark the pavement for any underground gas, electric and sewer lines. We cannot excavate and begin repairs until the pavement is marked.
  - » How quickly we are able to locate the break. Once the pavement is marked, we locate the leak or main break. Water can travel far underground before surfacing, so some breaks are more difficult to locate than others.
  - » The nature of the leak. Once the leak is uncovered, we can determine the best fix. Sometimes we can make the repair with a clamp around the leak in the pipe; other times we must replace a valve or an entire section of pipe. And, if other utilities are in close proximity, it can complicate repairs and even require hand-digging. A typical break can be repaired in 4-6 hours, but this can vary significantly.

## WILL MY WATER BE SHUT OFF?

- Water in our pipes flows under pressure, and for the safety of our employees, that water must be shut off to perform needed repairs. We will make every effort to minimize the amount of time you will be without water while our crew works to repair the main. In addition, as with any construction, there will be some unavoidable noise. We apologize for any inconvenience.

## WILL MY WATER QUALITY BE AFFECTED?

- Water quality is not always affected by main breaks or leaks.
- When water service is restored, you may notice air in your pipes and the water may be discolored. The discoloration isn't harmful, but can stain. If you experience discolored water, let the cold water run in the tub for a few minutes to get rid of the air and color.

## WHEN WILL PERMANENT PAVEMENT RESTORATION OF THE AREA OCCUR?

- After a main break, we apply a temporary patch to any damaged pavement. Permanent restoration can take up to 90 days after the leak is repaired to allow time for the ground to settle as it dries out. We check the integrity of the temporary restoration on a regular basis, but if you see settling or "pot holes" develop, please contact us at 1-866-430-0820.

## TRAVEL SAFELY!

Please use caution when our crews are in the road! They are working as safely and quickly as possible to make repairs.

In addition, in the state of Missouri, drivers are required to move over for stopped utility vehicles. The law requires motorists to proceed with due caution, reduce speed and change lanes (when possible) when approaching a utility or emergency vehicle on the side of the road. Visit our website for more details: [amwater.com/moaw/about-us/workplace-safety/move-over-law](http://amwater.com/moaw/about-us/workplace-safety/move-over-law)

