



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Niagara Falls Water Board Issues Advisory on Preparing Buildings for Future Reopening

As the Niagara Falls Water Board (NFWB) prepares for the reopening of business and industry in Niagara Falls, when allowed by State and local authorities, it is helping the public to understand the steps that should be taken to address degradation in water quality in buildings that have been shut down or used infrequently during COVID-19 related closures. Businesses that are preparing for re-opening should have a plan for addressing stagnant water in building plumbing.

When building water systems are not used, the water inside internal pipes becomes stagnant and its quality degrades due in part to the dissipation of the trace amounts of disinfecting chemicals added at the water treatment plant in order to make water safe to drink. This can lead to the growth of microorganisms that may be harmful if consumed or if inhaled as droplets during showering or other activities. Where water remains stagnant in hot water systems because of disuse, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has noted that water temperatures may decrease and can cause conditions that increase the risk for growth and spread of *Legionella*, the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease (77-108°F), and other biofilm-associated bacteria.

In addition, internal plumbing develops a protective scale that may be destabilized by stagnant water and this could expose water to particulate contamination or leaching of toxic metals, including lead if any is present in the plumbing system. Stagnant building water also may be discolored and have an unpleasant taste or odor.

For these reasons, building water systems that have not been used for extended periods should be flushed throughout the entire building. This includes water-using appliances like ice makers and dishwashers. Shower heads and faucets should be cleaned, refrigerator filters should be replaced, and hot water tanks should be drained and refilled.

Basic flushing for residences, small commercial buildings, and small retail businesses would include running cold water at all points for 10 to 30 minutes – including showers, sink faucets, refrigerator water dispensers, etc. – and then running hot water at all points with a hot-water supply until the water

reaches its maximum temperature. For more detailed information and recommendations specific to your building, consult a licensed plumber.

The NFWB does not maintain or flush customers' internal building water plumbing, and is issuing this advisory as a service to its customers. For assistance with flushing buildings, the NFWB recommends that customers contact a licensed plumber. Additional information on steps to take to prepare building water systems for reopening is available from the CDC [here](#). The CDC's guidance includes information on reducing the risk of Legionnaires' disease, guidance for hotels, hot tub safety, industrial cooling towers, and more. The CDC further recommends that fire sprinklers, eye wash stations, and other safety devices be regularly flushed, cleaned, and disinfected according to manufacturers' specifications.

The water available through the Water Board's mains remains fresh and clean, and properly flushing your building's water supply will ensure the freshest, best-quality water in your building. For more information on the quality of your drinking water, the Water Board's Annual Drinking Water Quality Report for 2019 is available at: <https://nfwb.org/reports/quality/>.

For more information on the NFWB, go to: www.NFWB.org.

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About the Niagara Falls Water Board:

The Niagara Falls Water Board is a public benefit corporation created in 2002 by a special act of the New York State Legislature. Its mission is to provide safe and reliable water and wastewater management services to our community in an economical and efficient manner. In 2003, it acquired the drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems previously owned and operated by the City of Niagara Falls, a separate municipal entity. It owns and operates a water treatment plant, a wastewater treatment plant, a pumping station located in the Niagara Gorge, two elevated water storage tanks, seven lift stations, and more than 500 miles of water and sewer service lines. The Water Board serves nearly 18,000 residential, commercial, and industrial users.