



Water Enterprise | November 17, 2022



## Doing Our Part to Save Water

### PREVENTING LEAKS ON OUR OWN PIPELINES

Just as we ask our customers to fix their leaks, the SFPUC implements a Water Loss Reduction Program to monitor, analyze and reduce leaks on our water pipes. This includes carefully calibrating the water pressure in pipes to minimize pipe stress which leads to leaks and breaks. We find small leaks before they become large breaks through acoustic systems that literally listen for small leaks. We also use satellite imagery to detect potential leaks. We strive to replace up to 12 miles of water pipelines each year to fix them before they break.

### WHAT HAPPENS AT A MAIN BREAK

The SFPUC owns and operates more than 1,200 miles of water pipeline in San Francisco. Almost 150 miles of those pipes are 100 years old. Although we strive to replace pipes before they break, main breaks still do occur. When a break or a leak is confirmed, we dispatch staff to the scene as quickly as possible. Personnel must allow the water to flow through the break until they can safely close valves on the pipes to shut off the water. They do so carefully to minimize impacts to water customers, to prevent air from getting into the pipes that cause more main breaks, and to prevent a cross connection that allows untreated water into the water pipelines.

### WHY DO WATER MAINS BREAK?

Water mains leak and break due to a variety of factors. Large temperature changes and cool weather tend to make the pipelines more brittle and prone to breakage. The age of the pipe, the kind of pipe, and also the location of the pipe all can impact the integrity of a water main.



If you  
see a  
broken  
water main,  
please contact  
311 at [311.org](https://www.sfpuc.org/311).

## USING LESS IN OUR BUILDINGS

Our teams ensure that our own corporation yards and office buildings in the Bay Area use efficient fixtures to reduce water use. We use drought tolerant plants as often as possible on our properties to minimize outdoor watering at our facilities around the Bay Area.

We ask that our customers do the same. We also [require](#) that all new development projects of 100,000 gross square feet or larger in San Francisco install and operate systems onsite to collect, treat, and reuse wastewater for non-drinking purposes like flushing toilets and urinals and irrigation. [All commercial buildings in San Francisco](#) are required to install water efficient fixtures such as showerheads, aerators, toilets and urinals. We also [codified](#) water waste restrictions that prohibit water waste indoors and out.

Our water conservation staff offer resources, rebates, and incentives to San Francisco businesses and residents to be water wise. Find out more at [sfpuc.org/savewater](http://sfpuc.org/savewater).



## PILOTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

We are not afraid to [try to new technologies](#) to reduce our water use and find new sources of water supply. That includes working with businesses to use less water – like Anchor Brewing. We also are piloting a program called Atmospheric Water Generation, that literally generates water from the air. As we plan for the future, we are investing in new drinking water supplies such as purified water that will be less vulnerable with a changing climate and new regulations.

Visit us at [sfpuc.org](http://sfpuc.org) to learn more!



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**Water Power Sewer**  
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