

WINTER 2018

Fairfax Water

STRAIGHT  
FROM THE  
TAP

## Watershed Education - Teaching Students How to Protect Our Drinking Water

Do you know what happens to a drop of rain when it falls to the ground? In October of 2018, Fairfax Water staff used a watershed model to teach students from Stone Middle School how daily activities can impact their drinking water source. In a developed area like ours, much of the rainwater flows into the storm drain and ends up in our streams. Rain that flows into our waterways, whether directly or through the storm drain, is called stormwater runoff. As stormwater flows across streets, sidewalks, lawns, and parking lots, it carries fertilizers, road salt, pet waste, litter and other materials into the storm drain and ultimately into our drinking water sources. Here are a few things you can do to protect your watershed:

- \* Reduce the amount of salt used to melt ice on your driveway and sidewalks. Time and a small amount of salt can do a lot of melting!



- \* If a pesticide spills or leaks, don't use a hose to clean it up. Soak up the liquid with an absorbent material like sawdust or kitty litter, sweep the material into a plastic bag, and clean the area with a mixture of water and bleach.

- \* Spread mulch over bare ground to prevent soil erosion and reduce the flow of polluted runoff from your lawn into local waterways.

- \* Minimize the use of fertilizer and pesticides on your lawn.

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## 'Main Break Season' is Here

Water main breaks are a common occurrence this time of year. Changing temperatures cause the pipes and soil around water mains to expand and contract, putting stress on vulnerable areas. We're fortunate that much of our system is newer than the national average, but our repair crews are still very busy during the winter months.

If you've ever passed one of our trucks and wondered what the crew was doing, the answer could be right at your fingertips. With a few clicks, you can find real-time updates on active water main breaks.

Visit our website at [www.fairfaxwater.org](http://www.fairfaxwater.org) and click the Main Breaks tab to visit the Water Main Break Webpage. You can also use [www.fwnotifications.org/public](http://www.fwnotifications.org/public) to reach the same page.

## 'Main Break Season' (continued)



### *How we repair a main break*

- 1** - An employee is immediately dispatched to the site to determine if it is actually a main break and to set up safety equipment. If there is a main break, a crew is dispatched to locate nearby valves to isolate the broken main from the water system. This minimizes service disruptions.
- 2** - Fairfax Water also notifies Miss Utility of the impending excavation so the water main and other utilities near the water main break can be identified. Repair work cannot begin until all other utilities in the area are identified so that the crew does not damage them. This can be a time-consuming step but it is necessary to make safe repairs.
- 3** - After the utility lines are marked, excavation can begin. Construction equipment helps to remove most of the ground above the pipe and a pump removes water from the excavated trench. Most Fairfax Water pipes are buried from 3 to 10 feet below ground. Additional measures may be taken to ensure the safety of the workers. This can extend the time required to repair a break.
- 4** - Once the pipe is exposed, crews can begin to repair or replace the broken main. When the repair is complete, crews open a nearby hydrant to flush air and sediment from the pipe before reconnecting it to the system.
- 5** - Next, the repair crew backfills the trench with gravel and prepares the road for patching. Workers use cold-mix asphalt as a temporary patch until Fairfax Water's contractor can permanently repave the road.

If your water service has been interrupted due to a water main break, sediment in the pipe can cause water containing this sediment to enter your home. To prevent clogs, remove the aerators from your sinks and washing machine and run the water for a few minutes to flush your pipes. You may also experience cloudy water and bursts of air when service is restored. This is caused by air in the pipes and can be cleared by running the water for a few minutes.

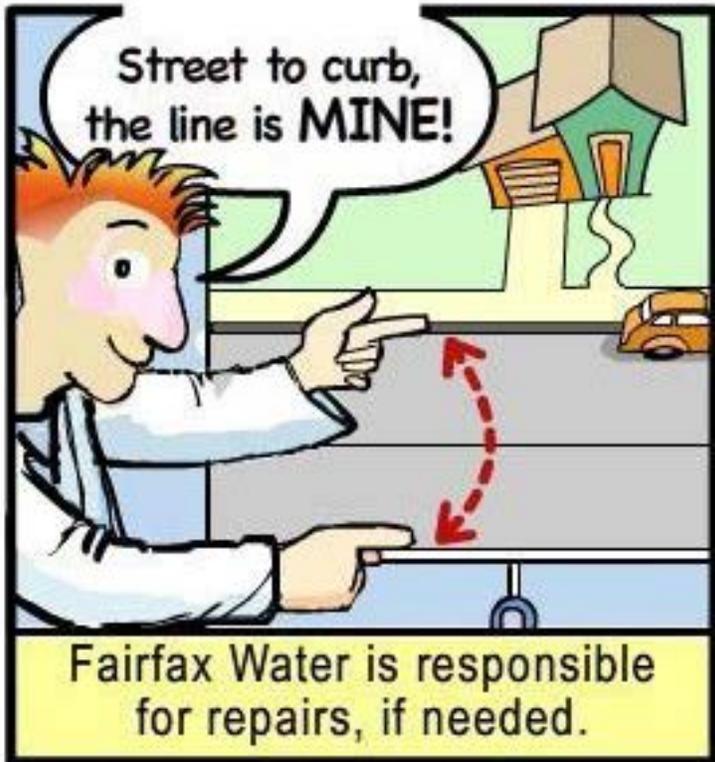
Watch our Main Break video here:  
<https://bit.ly/2Ddz4sw>



# Glad You Asked!

Find more helpful information on our website at:

[www.fairfaxwater.org/news](http://www.fairfaxwater.org/news)



**Q.** What can I do to prevent my water pipes from freezing this winter?

**A.** There are a few things you can do but a good rule of thumb is to keep the pipes insulated or keep the water in the pipes moving. Try using foam pipe covers to insulate pipes exposed to the outdoors or in colder areas of your home. You can also leave your faucet on to allow for a constant thin stream of water when you know your water will not be used during very cold days or nights. This allows the water to keep moving and this may help keep the water in the pipe from freezing.

If you have additional questions, call 703-698-5800, TTY 711, or e-mail us at [customers@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:customers@fairfaxwater.org).



**Fairfax Water**



**DON'T FORGET THE APP!**  
AVAILABLE FOR IOS  
AND ANDROID



If you have a question or concern, contact us at: [pr@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:pr@fairfaxwater.org) or call 703-698-5600, TTY 711.



# Kids' Corner



## Ralph's 'Invasive' Neighbor

Chad the Shad is a fish who lives with his family in the Potomac River. A new neighbor moved in who doesn't look familiar. This is known as an **invasive species**. An invasive species is a type of animal that isn't natural to its environment. It causes problems by competing with native species for food or territory.



Who do you think is Ralph's uninvited neighbor?

Draw who you think it is!

You can find out more about **Invasive Species** at the Potomac Conservancy web site:

<https://bit.ly/2PDn5r4>

### We Want to Know . . .

If you have comments or suggestions about the newsletter, please send an e-mail to [pr@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:pr@fairfaxwater.org), call us at 703-289-6291, or write to us at this address:

Straight From the Tap Editor  
Fairfax Water  
8570 Executive Park Avenue  
Fairfax, VA 22031

### Important Numbers

#### Fairfax Water Services

Questions about water service  
703-698-5800

After hours/emergencies  
703-698-5613

To report a water main break  
703-698-5613 or e-mail  
[watermainbreak@fairfaxwater.org](mailto:watermainbreak@fairfaxwater.org)

Questions about billing  
703-698-5800

All other Fairfax Water departments  
703-698-5600

#### Sewer Services

##### Fairfax County

Department of Public Works  
Wastewater Trouble Response  
Center  
703-323-1211  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/wastewater](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/wastewater)

##### City of Falls Church

Department of Public Works  
703-248-5350  
[www.fallschurchva.gov](http://www.fallschurchva.gov)

##### City of Fairfax

Department of Public Works  
703-385-7810  
[www.fairfaxva.gov](http://www.fairfaxva.gov)

#### Dig with C.A.R.E.

Miss Utility at 1-800-552-7001 or 811, <http://va811.com/homeowners/how-to-when-to>

Use TTY 711 (Virginia Relay) for all numbers unless stated otherwise

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**December 24**  
Fairfax Water offices closed

**December 25**  
Christmas Day  
Fairfax Water offices closed

**January 1**  
New Year's Day  
Fairfax Water offices closed

**January 21**  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
Fairfax Water offices closed

**February 2**  
World Wetlands Day

**February 12**  
Lincoln's Birthday

**February 14**  
Valentine's Day

**February 18**  
George Washington's Birthday (obsv.)  
a.k.a Presidents' Day  
Fairfax Water offices closed



Fairfax Water is a public, non-profit water authority serving nearly two million people in the Northern Virginia communities of Fairfax County, Loudoun, Prince William, Fort Belvoir, Herndon, Dulles, Vienna, Alexandria, Falls Church, and Fairfax City.



### Water-Saving Tip

Upgrade to an inexpensive, water-efficient shower head and save up to 750 gallons of water a month. For more tips on saving water, visit [www.mwco.org/environment/water/watersupply/wisewater.asp](http://www.mwco.org/environment/water/watersupply/wisewater.asp). 💧