



May 11, 2020

**Re: ACSA Provides Tips to Businesses Reopening Buildings
During the Pandemic**

Dear Customer:

Along with the rest of the country, we at the Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) have been closely monitoring the recent developments surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the recent guidance provided by Governor Northam about a Phase One reopening of some state businesses on May 15, the ACSA would like to provide you with the following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) because safely restarting water use in an unused or underused building requires several preventative steps.

You need to make sure your business or building's water system is safe to use. The CDC has a comprehensive, dedicated page that outlines the eight steps for a business to take before a business or building should reopen. The complete list can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>.

The CDC recommends a complete flushing of the hot and cold-water systems in a business or building that has been involved in a prolonged shutdown period. Stagnant or standing water in unused or underused buildings can increase the risk for growth and spread of *Legionella* and other biofilm-associated bacteria. Stagnant water can also lead to low or undetectable levels of disinfectant, such as chlorine.

For most businesses, some common steps can be taken to return their buildings to service. When a business is being returned to service, an adult should be present to ensure that the meter works, leaks are minimized, wastewater piping is intact, and the building's plumbing is flushed. If your staff is NOT knowledgeable about how the plumbing in the building works or about flushing methods, consider contacting a plumber for help. Water and delivery systems beyond the public meter are the responsibility of the business owner, including all piping and equipment inside structures that use water.

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A thorough flushing process is necessary before restarting your business. The purpose of building flushing is to replace all water inside building piping with fresh water. Flush the cold-water lines first, and then the hot water lines. Organize flushing to maximize the flow of water (e.g. opening all cold water outlets simultaneously to flush the service line and then flushing outlets individually starting near where the water enters the structure). When flushing the hot water lines allow the hot water to reach its maximum temperature. Determine if your manufacturer recommends draining the hot water heater after a prolonged period of disuse. Ensure that all maintenance activities are carried out according to the manufacturer's instructions or by professionals. Run enough water through all outlets (e.g. hose bibs, faucets, showerheads, toilets etc.), removing aerators when possible. Typical durations in existing protocols range from 10 to 30 minutes for each outlet (duration varies based on outlet velocity). Replace all point-of-use filters, including filters in refrigerators.

Inspect and flush where appropriate any mechanical equipment that uses water, such as cooling towers, boilers, pumps, backflow preventers, ice machines, drink dispensing machines, water heaters, decorative features such as water fountains, and hot tubs or spas.

For those who follow the CDC guidance to safely restart water use in unused or underused buildings by thoroughly flushing their plumbing system, the ACSA will consider a one-time credit for water used in these preventative safety measures. To request credit consideration, please complete the form at www.serviceauthority.org.

Research from the CDC demonstrates that COVID-19 has not been detected in any drinking water because current water treatment methods, like those used for your drinking water, remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.

If you have questions about the quality of your water after a prolonged shutdown, contact the ACSA at (434) 977-4511. For continuing updates on the ACSA, I invite you to visit our website - www.serviceauthority.org – and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary O'Connell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Gary O'Connell
Executive Director