

Ensuring Your Water through Disasters Our Preparations for Emergencies, Large and Small



Commissioner
Bruce Gardiner

In previous articles we have talked with you about how the District prepares to handle emergencies, both large and small, that can affect your water supply. Major wind storms can result in loss of power, and earthquakes might disrupt the flow of water from the Tolt or Cedar Rivers, which supply Seattle's wholesale system, and through Seattle to us, the distributor and you, the retail customer. **What has Northshore done to ensure that we can bring water to you even if our major supplies are disrupted?**

Our water comes predominantly from the Tolt watershed through two large pipelines that run from the foothills of the Cascades, east of Carnation, to Lake Forest Park, through Bothell and Kenmore and on to north Seattle. If the Tolt supply is disrupted, then we can alternatively receive water from the Cedar River watershed through the Eastside supply line that ties the two Seattle supplies together on the eastside of Lake Washington. We can also tie into the Cedar water feed from a pipeline that brings Cedar water into the Shoreline area. In either case, the supplies are at a higher elevation than most of the District, and the water flows naturally, by gravity, into our tanks and our system.

Small emergency interties with neighboring water utilities can also be activated to provide emergency water supplies. We also hold a water right of approximately 10 million gallons of water per day (mgd) shared in a 36 mgd right with Woodinville Water District and the City of Everett. As that supply is developed in the future, it will result in water coming to the District from the North, through the Cross Valley Water District, totally separate from the Seattle water supply.

As we noted in our last article on this topic, Northshore's five reservoirs and

three standpipes can hold up to twenty-nine million gallons of water, giving us approximately three to five days of water supply in storage. With emergency conservation, this could be stretched to about seven days.

Water main breaks can also disrupt the water supply on a smaller scale. NUD uses several measures to protect against this possibility. Within the District, wherever practical, we install our water distribution lines in a loop, enabling us to supply water from either direction in the event of a line break. For major critical facilities, such as Evergreen Hospital, we have installed lines from more than one distribution system, providing water from alternative sources of supply within the District. NUD maintains the necessary materials and equipment and a highly efficient staff to perform emergency repairs often within hours of being notified of a leak.

No one likes a broken water line. Unfortunately, within a system of 270 miles of water main, breaks do occur. Over the last thirty years, we have proactively worked to replace and update aging infrastructure. Innovations to our record keeping and engineering tools now let us better identify the useful life of pipes in the ground.

With many different kinds of water pipe in use in the District, it is a challenge to forecast the practical life of each pipe. But recently, we hired a company to help survey and inspect both the internal and external condition of one of our critical pipelines. This highly specialized process uses some of the most advanced technology available and requires no digging. Through this survey, we will develop an even more efficient pipe replacement program, and better serve you both now and in the future. 💧

Rate Study for 2015

The District is in the process of doing a rate study for 2015. New rates will take effect beginning with the March 15, 2015 billing cycle.

Since the start of the economic recession, the District has not always passed along rate increases from King County (sewage treatment) and Seattle Public Utilities (water supply) to our ratepayers. Instead, we have repeatedly absorbed or delayed wholesale level rate increases. We felt that, since our ratepayers were impacted by the recession in so many other ways, we should do the best we can to minimize the additional burden from utility rate increases. We were able to accomplish this through operating costs reduction and by tapping into our reserves. For example, we received an 8.4% increase in water costs from Seattle Public Utilities in 2014 but we were able to keep all rates at the 2013 level.

However, we have been notified of further rate increases from our wholesale service providers for 2015, and will most likely have to adjust our rates upward in March.



One of NUD's three stand tanks designed to maintain our water supply in emergencies



We work year-round to find and replace aging portions of pipeline to prevent breaks

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You Have a Leak—NOW WHAT?

NUD's Quick Guide to Your Most Common Leak Questions

Your water bill is higher than usual or we've left you a "potential leak" notice. (Our meters have "smart" technology, so usage above a certain amount triggers a "leak check" alarm).

What do you do next? We hope this quick guide to commonly-asked leak questions can help you resolve leaks quickly, avoiding water and money loss—and extra stress!

My bill skyrocketed— do I have a leak?

Start by checking your water meter. If you don't know your meter location, we can help you find it—call (425) 398-4403.

- ▶ Make sure NO water is being used inside or outside the house.
- ▶ Check the **blue leak indicator dial** on your meter face. When water runs through the meter, the dial spins. If the dial is moving and no water is being used, you may have a leak.

Where is the leak?

To help isolate the leak to inside or outside your home:

- ▶ Turn off your home's main water shut-off valve—usually in the basement or garage. Or turn off all water fixtures and make sure no water is being used.
- ▶ Check the meter leak indicator dial again. If the dial stopped moving, the leak is inside the house. If the dial continues to move, the leak is outside between the meter and the house.

If the leak is inside, start by checking toilets and faucets:

- ▶ **Toilet dye test:** Drop a dye strip or a few drops of food coloring in the tank. Wait overnight if possible (the leak may be intermittent) or at least 30 minutes. If the dye has run into the bowl, the toilet has a leak.

If the leak is outside on your water supply line:

- ▶ Try the visual test first: Look (and feel) for signs of water flow or seepage on your property—maybe a puddle that never dries, or a darker spot on dry concrete. Check irrigation system or water feature connection points.
- ▶ If this doesn't uncover the leak location, you will need a professional's help—see next question.

Unfortunately, *we cannot help locate or repair water lines on private property*—these are the homeowner's responsibility.

**Leak Tip:
KNOW
YOUR
METER**

leak indicator dial

Dial spinning = water flowing

**Leak Tip:
DON'T
PANIC!**

**Leak Tip:
BEWARE
SNEAKY
LEAKS!**

Did you know a leaking toilet can waste **40,000 gallons** a month and **add over \$500** to your bi-monthly bill?

View the chart at www.nud.net for more info on how much water and money you can save by fixing leaks around your home.

How do I fix the leak?

Once you've isolated the leak, decide if you can tackle the issue yourself or if you need a professional plumber.

Videos on fixing common household leaks can be found at www.nud.net and savingwater.org.

If you are unable to isolate the leak or it's underground you will need help. Most plumbers can perform leak detection as well as leak repair services.

CALL (811) BEFORE YOU DIG: The law requires utility locates to prevent damage to other underground utilities.

Take the time to **get more than one bid** for leak repairs—a reliable plumber or contractor will give you a free estimate. If the water is gushing, we can help you turn it off at the meter—call (425) 398-4403.

I fixed the leak—can I get any help with my bill?

Each customer is allowed **one leak adjustment every two years**. To be eligible, you must do the following:

- ▶ **Make repairs within 30 days** of finding or being notified of the leak.
- ▶ **Fill out the Leak Adjustment Request form and submit with proof of repair.** The form is located at www.nud.net, "download billing forms."
- ▶ **Continue to make payments** in the amount recommended on the leak adjustment forms.
- ▶ **Wait for response.** The request will be considered once the meter is read for the billing period *following the leak repair*.

*More information on troubleshooting for leaks, including our **one-page reference guide**, is available at www.nud.net. Our customer service representatives are always happy to help answer your questions.*