

Water Flow & Pressure Fact Sheet

Are you concerned about low water pressure? Usually the problem is low flow rather than low pressure. Generally when customers say not enough water is flowing from a tap or fixture, something on the customer's property restricts flow. In some newer homes, especially at the higher elevations, automated irrigation systems can cause flow problems. If you notice low flow during the irrigation season, the automated irrigation system is the likely cause.

Property owners are responsible for the condition of all plumbing and pipes that water flows through after it leaves the water meter at the street. Some water flow problems are temporary. The City of Dallas provides water to all services with a minimum pressure at the water meter of 25 pounds per square inch (psi). The State of Oregon has set a minimum pressure standard of 20 psi for public water systems. Most homes receive water at a pressure between 35 and 85 psi. We regularly monitor pressure throughout the City's system.

Construction or main repair in your neighbourhood can affect the water pressure during the construction period. A call to the City Department of Public Works, 503.831.3562, may be able to identify the problem.

Do low-flow fixtures affect flow?
Low-flow showerheads, faucet aerators, and toilets will reduce the flow of water. The state plumbing code has required that all toilets installed since 1992 be low-flow, high-efficiency fixtures.

Parts inside low-flow shower-heads and faucet aerators can become clogged. Remove the fixtures and flush them out routinely to maintain water flow.

Do I have galvanized pipe?

Corroded galvanized pipe in homes and businesses causes 75% of the water flow problems in homes. Pipes are often exposed near the hot water heater, under sinks, or on the property side of the water meter. Galvanized pipe is silver when new, dulling to gray as it ages. It was widely installed in homes built before 1980.

Why is galvanized pipe sometimes a problem?

It corrodes on the inside. As water passes through, corrosion deposits build up inside and partially block water flow. Older pipes may be so corroded that even a pencil would not fit through the center of the pipe. Running water through a corroded pipe is like sipping through a coffee stirrer instead of a soft drink straw. Less fluid flows through. In most cases you cannot clean the inside of the pipe without causing leaks: The pipe must be replaced to correct the problem.

Can I test for corrosion?

- Run three faucets in your house at the same time. If flow decreases significantly at the first tap when you turn the others on, your pipes are probably corroded.
- If you have galvanized pipe and water is discolored when you first run the tap, you may have a corrosion problem.

What can I do about a low-flow problem?

- Run water from only one tap at a time. Avoid watering the lawn when you are using water indoors.
- Avoid having the outside irrigation system running at 7:00 a.m. The City has noted that water usage in the summer consistently peaks at 7:00 a.m.
- Ask yourself whether the flow changed recently. Have you recently had work done on your plumbing? Was your service shut off for some reason? Check to see that the valve at your meter is open. If you have one, it should be in a straight line with the pipe, if it's not or you have questions, contact the City Department of Public Works at 503.831.6562.
- If corrosion is blocking the flow of water, you may need to replace pipe. Replacing galvanized pipe requires a plumbing permit from the City of Dallas, 503.831.3571.
- Consult a plumber to see if a pressure booster on your system might help.
- If pressure seems too low, and you have an installed pressure-reducing valve, the valve may have failed. Consult with a plumber to check that the device is operating properly.
- Check cartridges on home water filter systems. If a cartridge is clogged, replace it.