

Water Systems

The City of Boulder's Water Utility is responsible for managing, storing, treating, monitoring, and delivering safe, potable water to Boulder residents. This function ranges from monitoring source water high in the mountains, to the drinking water that is delivered at the customer's tap.

During the September 2013 flood event, these systems did not experience any substantial outages or failures. This is largely because of the city's ongoing maintenance and capital improvement program, intended to keep the system running safely and smoothly.

How to report a water emergency

Use these numbers during a flood or water emergency, including a water main leak or break.

- Call 303-413-7100 – Between 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday
- Call 303-441-3245 – For after-hour emergencies

Did you know?

Property owners are responsible for the water pipes inside individual buildings. You should know the location of the water shutoff valve inside your property and how to shut it off in case of an emergency. This knowledge can help prevent extensive and expensive property damage.

Drinking Water

If the municipal drinking water system is compromised due to a flood or any other water emergency, the City of Boulder may issue a *Boil Water Order* for some or all of its water customers. If a boil water order is issued, customers should bring water to a rolling boil for three minutes for drinking or cooking purposes, or use bottled water. As soon as tests indicate that the drinking water is safe, the Boil Water Order will be lifted.

Did you know?

The city performs more than 14,000 drinking water quality tests annually. This testing ensures that the water delivered to your tap meets the standards set by our community, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

If you have concerns about the safety of your drinking water, call the city's Drinking Water Quality Program at 303-413-7400 and visit www.boulderwater.net.

Sewer Systems

The city has two separate "sewer" systems; a storm sewer for collecting and discharging stormwater and a sanitary sewer for collecting and treating wastewater.

Stormwater Collection System – Also known as the storm drain, storm sewer, or municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4), Boulder's stormwater collection system is designed to keep Boulder's streets passable during normal rain events. The system consists of inlets, catch basins, pipes, street gutters, and other features that collect untreated water from streets and properties and deliver it to major drainageways, such as creeks.

Wastewater Collection System – Also known as the sanitary sewer system, Boulder’s wastewater collection system consists of underground pipes that utilize gravity to transport untreated wastewater from residential, commercial and industrial properties to the city’s Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), located on 75th Street near Boulder Creek. Wastewater collected from smaller pipes throughout the city flows downhill into larger pipes known as “interceptors.” Several large-diameter pipes convey the city’s wastewater to a primary interceptor that delivers the majority of flow to the WWTF.

Sewer Backups

A variety of scenarios produced basement flooding in September 2013, depending on the elevation, location and plumbing configuration of each property that was affected.

In many cases, it was surface flooding and elevated groundwater levels that resulted in below grade flooding. In other cases, floodwaters carried dirt, debris and rocks into the wastewater collection system, causing localized blockages. In general, the huge amount floodwater and groundwater introduced to the system caused water that could not fit in downstream pipes to flow to the next lowest point such as a basement or a crawlspace.

The city is currently in the process of removing debris from the wastewater collection system, and prioritizing sewer rehabilitation and replacement projects. The city recently hired a contractor to remove debris from the collection system’s largest pipes – called interceptors. A significant amount of debris has already been removed and work will continue throughout 2014.

Prevent Sewer Backups

Consult with a professional plumber to determine what backup prevention methods may be most appropriate for your specific plumbing configuration. Some of the options available to help prevent sewer backups include installing backflow prevention devices and/or check valves, which require a permit for installation and inspection. Visit www.BoulderPlandevlop.net, click on ‘Applications and Forms database’ and search for ‘Plumbing Permit Application.’

In addition to flood insurance, property owners can also purchase insurance coverage for sewer backups. Visit bouldercolorado.gov/water/flood-insurance or www.floodsmart.gov.

Report Sewer Backups

If there is a sewer backup on your property, call 303-413-7100 immediately to request the city’s assistance to help you determine the cause and possible resolution of the issue.

The sanitary sewer service line is the responsibility of the property owner, up to and including the connection to the city-owned sewer line. Property owners should consult with a professional plumber to investigate and resolve problems determined to be in the sewer service line.

Insurance

Consider buying flood insurance now to cover both structures and personal possessions. Review your existing insurance policies to determine if your current coverage is comprehensive enough to cover potential flood losses. In addition to buying flood insurance, property owners should also consider purchasing additional insurance coverage for sewer backups.

Visit www.bouldercolorado.gov/water/flood-insurance or www.floodsmart.gov or call 1-888-379-9531.