



Debra A. McCarty, Water Commissioner

7/25/18

## **Sansom and S. Juniper Streets Water Main Break Q&A**

### **What happened on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018**

The Philadelphia Water Department was notified of a large water main break at approximately 4:00 am. The break was identified on a 48-inch main in S. Juniper at Sansom St. After getting the main shut down, assessment of businesses and properties in the area began with our Customer Field Service Reps. PWD crews worked to clean up the area to get streets back open, and restoration companies were assigned to work on cleaning and drying businesses that were impacted by the break.

### **What took place immediately after?**

In the immediate days that followed the water main break, other utilities such as PECO, PGW, Veolia, and Verizon, worked to secure their infrastructure, make repairs as necessary, and restored service to customers as quickly as possible.

PWD isolated a broken 8-inch water main so that service could be restored to all but one property, which was subsequently provided temporary service. Our crews worked to continue cleanup efforts and PWD set up an information tent for customers to meet Customer Field Service representatives and Claims Adjusters in case they were still in need of a cleaning company, or if there were any questions that needed to be answered.

### **What is the plan going forward?**

At this time, PWD is still working on a design to replace the broken water main and sewer. This is not an easy project as it is complicated by the close quarters of multiple utilities underground and the need to do this safely. Once PWD completes the design for the work that needs to be done, we will bid this out as an Emergency Project. The length of time is not yet determined, but it is expected to take several months before our contractor will finish the work that is necessary. After PWD's contractor replaces the water mains and repairs the sewer, the other utilities can then proceed to restore their infrastructure. Once all this work is completed, the street will be paved.

While we will attempt to complete this work as expeditiously as possible, it could potentially last through the end of this year, or into early 2019. It is not expected for the intersection of Sansom and S. Juniper to open until all this work is done.

**What is a tentative time-line moving forward?**

PWD plans to have this job out to bid by August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

We expect to have a Notice to Proceed issued by August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018, which allows our Contractor to begin work shortly after that is issued.

Should everything go smoothly, we hope to be finished in the excavation by the middle of October.

PWD will then turn the intersection over to the other utilities.

Once all work is done, sidewalks will be restored, and the road will be paved. We will provide updates once we begin working, and know how work is progressing.

**What work is happening right now?**

PWD currently has a contractor on site isolating a 20-inch main. This is keeping the restoration work moving along while the design work is taking place.

**Can you explain the Claims Process?**

The Pennsylvania Tort Claims Act limits liability for these incidents to \$500,000.

This is the total amount that can be paid out per incident, and not per customer. If all the damages total over \$500,000 amongst all the impacted customers, then the disbursement of funds will be decided by a judge.

Customers will have 2 years to complete and turn in all their claims paper work to Risk Management for this water main break.

**What if my Insurance is not covering this?**

The Water Department has partnered with the City of Philadelphia Commerce Department and the Office of Emergency Management to take the lead towards securing a disaster declaration with The Pennsylvania Office of Emergency Management (PEMA) so that customers could possibly qualify for a Small Business Association (SBA) loan. This loan will be for up to 40% of uninsured losses and at a low interest rate.

**Can you assure me this will never happen again here?**

Unfortunately, we are not able to ever make any assurance or promise of this nature. What we can do is tell you that we are taking every necessary measure to make sure we will not be returning here in any of our lifetimes or future generations. Unfortunately, water main breaks can occur for any number of reasons, and the reason for this particular break is still not determined. We will work to have this main examined and tested to see if a cause can be identified.

However, we will replace as much of this water main as necessary to make sure we are connecting to other solid sections of main, and that we do not have any issues as a result of this work. We hope to never see large breaks like this, and for the smaller water mains, we are aggressively working to replace those before they break. The larger transmission mains are inspected periodically to see if we can hear any leaks, and at that point, do repairs before they become large water main breaks.

We take our responsibility to our customers and the citizens of Philadelphia very seriously, and we hope that the repairs we are doing will ensure that we never have to return to that exact location ever again.

**How can we be kept up to date and informed throughout this project?**

PWD has already created a weblink for this location, and we will post updates and current information there as it becomes available. There will still be the occasional letter delivered as necessary, but updates may be posted online more frequently. When you signed in tonight, we asked for email addresses, and we will send notifications when we update our website with any information.

The website is [www.phila.gov/water/notifications](http://www.phila.gov/water/notifications)

**Who can I contact going forward if I have questions about claims, business impact or general questions regarding the work PWD will be doing?**

The City of Philadelphia has multiple people involved that can assist you with different issues. We ask that you contact the following people for information based on your needs.

For Water Department related concerns, you can continue to contact John DiGiulio. John can be reached at [John.DiGiulio@phila.gov](mailto:John.DiGiulio@phila.gov) or 267-254-1930.

For Business related concerns, you can contact Carol Brooks with the City of Philadelphia Commerce Department. Carol can be reached at [Carol.Brooks@phila.gov](mailto:Carol.Brooks@phila.gov) or 215-683-2127.

For Claims related concerns, you can contact Shreen Williams with the City of Philadelphia Risk Management Office. Shreen can be reached at [Shreen.Williams@phila.gov](mailto:Shreen.Williams@phila.gov) or 215-683-1714.