



WHAT CAUSES A WATER MAIN BREAK

Water main breaks occur for a number of reasons, but the most common reasons are age and temperature. All materials wear out over time, which can eventually result in a water main failure. Temperature is also a big factor. As the ground freezes, it contracts and puts pressure on the water mains. While unlikely, the water inside the pipe can also freeze resulting in outward pressure on the water main. Hot temperatures and dry air can cause the ground to shift and settle, creating a sheering effect.

Other factors that cause a water main break include:

Material – All materials wear out over time. Cast iron can become very brittle over time, increasing the likelihood it will crack as it expands and contracts with changing temperatures.

Erosion – If the soil around a water main erodes due to a previous water issue, nearby construction, or other issues, the area around the main can become unstable.

Corrosion – Steel and cast iron pipes are not treated for corrosion, so they can wear through over time.

Age – Age alone is not an issue, as some pipes installed in the 1900s are still working perfectly. However, the likelihood of a water main break increases in pipes older than 60 years.

Accidents – Unfortunately, there are many human factors that can cause a water main break too. The most common is construction and accidents often result in a water main break.

Lincoln Park
New Jersey

Borough of Lincoln Park

Water Department

Water main breaks are generally repaired and completed within a few hours; the average time for a water main repair is 4 hours. While this is the most common, it is not what always happens. Things that need to be taken into consideration are the location of the break, how much damage the break caused and even the age of the pipes where the water main break occurred.

Signs of a Water Main Break

- Water gushing or flowing from the ground
- Sinking roads, sidewalks, or ground
- Water seeping or pooling out of the ground
- Unusually wet or soggy ground

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