

Water mains burst on a regular basis, wherever water is supplied, anywhere in the world.

Fact Sheet

Water main bursts – an expected occurrence in the water industry

Water main 'bursts' or breaks are an expected operational occurrence in the water industry. They happen on a regular basis, wherever water is supplied, anywhere in the world.

Unfortunately, water main bursts can cause considerable inconvenience to those impacted by them and can also leave damage to properties in their wake.

Water main bursts tend to occur late in the evening or in the very early hours of the morning, when most people are sleeping. During that time there is little demand for water, causing a build-up of pressure in pipelines. This pressure can then put a strain on any weaknesses in the pipelines, causing them to burst. However, main breaks can and do happen at any time of the day.

LinkWater's proactive Asset Management Program ensures everything that can be done to reduce and prevent mains bursts from occurring is done.

But just as you would not rip down the walls of your home to periodically check the pipes behind them, water utilities are not able to invasively inspect the extensive network of underground pipelines by frequently digging them up. In most cases, this would actually increase the risk of pipelines rupturing.

Like your pipes at home, LinkWater's trunk mains were built with a certain life expectancy in mind. Certain pipelines can be in service for up to 80 years. When they get to the end of their life span, they are replaced. However, unexpected bursts can happen to pipelines of any age. Reasons for this may include:

- ground movement and soil conditions
- weather events
- unexplained corrosion.

Fixing a burst water main is complicated. This process can take some time depending on the location of the rupture, the time of day and weather conditions at the time. LinkWater works with your local council to respond to and fix water main bursts.

Once the ruptured section of pipe is located, the valves that control the flow of water to the affected area have to be turned off so the main can be fixed.



Crews are also working simultaneously to provide an alternative water supply, if available, so that pressure and water outages to residents are minimised.

Turning off a valve is not like turning off a household tap or a matter of pushing a button. It often takes a great deal of manpower as each valve has to be manually turned off. Often, there can be more than four valves that each need to be closed to fix the affected pipe. Because of the increased water pressure, it can sometimes take four or more people and up to 45 minutes to manually close each valve.

Once the flow of water is stopped, crews can begin repairing the section of burst pipe. In most cases, this involves bringing in heavy equipment such as excavators to uncover underground pipe and to patch or replace the affected section. This can take several hours depending on the extent of the problem, safety issues, weather conditions etc.

If you are affected by a water main break, you can be assured that LinkWater will work to restore water and pressure as quickly as possible and will take all steps to minimise inconvenience. If property damage results, LinkWater will work with affected residents to ensure properties are fully restored.

For more information, please phone LinkWater Freecall 1800 559 954.

