

# LENAWEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## Guidance for Reopening Buildings with Low or No Water Use

The Lenawee County Health Department is providing the following guidance for the reopening of buildings with low or no water usage during the current pandemic.

Water that sits stagnant in building plumbing for extended periods is at increased risk for leaching of metals (such as lead), reduced effectiveness of water treatment chemicals and bacterial growth. Take steps to ensure that all water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize these risks.

In order to help businesses manage their water quality, the CDC has provided detailed information on their [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) webpage. Additionally, there are several actions building owners and property managers can take prior to reopening:

- Monitor for leaks: Monitor the building during flushing to be sure there are no plumbing leaks or plugged drains that could lead to property damage.
- Flush your water system
  - Flush hot and cold water through all points of use (e.g., showers, sink faucets). Flushing may need to occur in segments (e.g., floors, individual rooms) due to facility size and water pressure. The purpose of building flushing is to replace all water inside building piping with fresh water.
  - Flush until the hot water reaches its maximum temperature.
  - Care should be taken to minimize splashing and aerosol generation during flushing.
  - Other water-using devices, such as ice machines, may require additional cleaning steps in addition to flushing, such as discarding old ice. Follow water-using device manufacturers' instructions.
  - Toilets: Flush at least twice to move fresh water through the plumbing.
  - Faucets and Showers: Run hot and cold water at full flow for several minutes each. Run cold water taps first, followed by hot water taps. If possible, remove faucet aerators before flushing.
  - Other Appliances and Apparatus: Flush other appliances and apparatus thoroughly, at full flow, to bring fresh water into the system. If you have an appliance that has a filter, such as a refrigerator or ice maker, follow the manufacturer's instructions for replacing water filters after flushing is complete.
- Clean all decorative water features, such as fountains
  - Be sure to follow any recommended manufacturer guidelines for cleaning.
  - Ensure that decorative water features are free of visible slime or biofilm.

The mission of the Lenawee County Health Department is to promote a safe and healthy environment.

- After the water feature has been re-filled, measure disinfectant levels to ensure that the water is safe for use.
- Ensure safety equipment including fire sprinkler systems, eye wash stations, and safety showers are clean and well-maintained
  - Regularly flush, clean, and disinfect these systems according to manufacturers' specifications.
- Maintain your water system
  - After your water system has returned to normal, ensure that the risk of bacteria growth is minimized by regularly checking water quality parameters such as temperature, pH, and disinfectant levels.
  - Follow your water management program, document activities, and promptly intervene when unplanned program deviations arise.

Another available resource is the [EPA Restoring Water Quality In Buildings For Reopening checklist](#), which can help businesses with the process of flushing their water system.

For more business-related COVID-19 guidance, please visit LCHD's Businesses and Employer's webpage at <http://www.lenawee.mi.us/932/COVID-19---Businesses-and-Employers>. Questions can be directed to 517-265-5226, option 5, or [lenaweehd@lenawee.mi.us](mailto:lenaweehd@lenawee.mi.us).