

# **Town of Watertown**

## **Department of Public Works**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

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## Trash and Recycling

*When is my trash and recycling day?*

You can look up your trash and recycling day at <http://local.republicservices.com/site/watertown-ma>.

*What is the proper way to put out trash and recycling for collection?*

Trash and Recycling containers must be placed at the opening of your driveway for pickup in a manner that avoids parked vehicles. All materials to be picked up must be out before 7:00 AM on the day of the scheduled pick-up.

*What do I do if my trash or recycling was not picked up?*

Contact Department of Public Works at 617-972-6420 to coordinate a pick-up of the missed trash, recycling, or yard waste.

*What types of items am I allowed to put out for trash pick-up?*

See “Watertown Trash and Recycling Guide” for details.

*I am moving, can I arrange for special pick-up?*

The Town does not provide additional services for cleaning out or moving in or out of a residence. Additional trash and recycling must be handled by the individuals involved. There are no extra pick-ups.

*How do I obtain an additional toter?*

One trash toter and one recycling toter is provided to all residential units by the Department. An additional recycling toter may be purchased from Department of Public Works (124 Orchard Street) for a cost of \$90 (payable in cash or check made out to “The Town of Watertown”). Additional trash toters are not available.

*How do I dispose of hazardous waste?*

See <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/832/Household-Hazardous-Waste>

*What are the recycling center’s hours and rules?*

The recycling center is open Friday and Saturday from 9 AM to 4 PM. It is open to Watertown residents only (identification required), no businesses. It is located at 76 Stanley Avenue. Please use Green River Way for access. See “Watertown Trash and Recycling Guide” for additional details.

*I am interested in composting. Does the Town offer a compost program?*

The Town currently does not offer municipal compost pick-up, but we do sell home compost bins at the DPW, 124 Orchard Street. The cost is \$40, payable in cash or check made out to "The Town of Watertown." We request that you call in advance for pick-up.

There are private firms that offer curbside compost pick-up for a fee.

## Water and Sewer

*How do I get my water turned on or off?*

Please call us at least 24-hours in advance at 617-972-6420 and speak with the Water Supervisor. The Water Supervisor will confirm that we are able to operate the shut off box. Then schedule an appointment.

*How do I change the billing name or address on my water bill?*

To change the address of the water bill, you can come to our office and show an identification as proof of the address. To change the billing name, you must provide a copy of the deed or a recent mortgage payment showing the new billing name.

If you are unable to visit the office in person, you can also provide this information via mail, provided the information is attested to by a notary public.

*Why is my water/sewer bill higher than my neighbor's bill?*

Each bill is based on the actual usage, and every family uses water differently. You cannot base your bill on your neighbor's. If you have questions about your usage, please contact us at 617-972-6420 and we will try to answer your questions.

*Who do I call if I have a sewer back-up?*

If you are having a sewer problem, please call us before you call a plumber. We will come out and check our main sewer, and let you know if the problem is ours or yours. There is no sense in paying a plumber to tell you your lateral is fine, and the problem is with the main sewer.

*What should I do when I move out?*

Final Water Reads are necessary when you sell your property. If the owner is using with a real estate agent, the agent must call us to schedule the appointment, to avoid scheduling duplication. If the homeowner is selling the property privately, either the attorney or the homeowner must call.

There is a fee of \$25.00 when scheduled 7 working days out from the original telephone call and \$40.00 when less than 7 working days. When scheduling the final read, the new owner's name and the mailing address must be available.

This information is all part of the billing process, at this point, DPW now has the new owner's name and mailing address for the water/sewer bill to be mailed to the proper owner.

Once the meter is read the paperwork must be picked up the following work day at the DPW, 124 Orchard Street. Public Works does not do final water reads on Thursdays.

*I'm building a new house, how do I get water/sewer service?*

Before installation of a new water or sewer can begin, a site plan must be submitted to DPW and approved. Once the plan is approved and a street opening permit is obtained, installation can begin. In order to obtain a water meter for a new water service, a building address must be assigned by DPW. Then a General Service Application must be filled out. There are fees for new services depending on building use and size.

*How do I pay my Town utility bill?*

The Town Water and Sewer Division bills quarterly, or four annual bills per account. Customers may pay the bills by mail (check only), online (<https://epay.cityhallsystems.com>), or in person at the Treasurer's Office at Town Hall, 149 Main Street (cash or check accepted). DPW does not accept payments for utility bills.

*My water is rusty, what do I do?*

From time to time you may experience "rusty" water. This is usually caused by:

- Hydrant flushing
- Someone using a large flow of water in a short time
- Unauthorized hydrant use
- A water main break

This water is bacteriologically safe to drink, but unpleasant to look at.

This situation can usually be resolved by running your cold water until it clears up. Locate the farthest and highest cold water faucet in your building. Remove the aerator if there is one and turn on the cold water faucet for a few minutes. Do not use the hot water since the sediments may be pulled into the hot water tank. If the water is still discolored after running the cold water, turn off the faucet and check it again later. If discoloration continues contact us at 617-972-6420.

*How do I prevent a sewer back-up into my house?*

You can do the following to help prevent a sewage backup:

- Avoid putting grease down your garbage disposal or household drain. It can solidify, collect debris and accumulate in city lines, or build up in your own system.
- Never flush disposable diapers, wipes, sanitary napkins, or paper towels down the toilet. They could plug up your drains and may damage your plumbing system.
- If you have an older home your lateral pipe joints could have deteriorated. Consider whether the roots of large shrubs or trees near the line could invade and break pipes. It is a good idea to know the location of your lateral line(s). Property maps can often be acquired from your city planning department.

- If the lowest level of your home is below ground level, such as a basement floor drain, it may one day be affected by a backup. One way to prevent a sewage backup through such below ground areas is to install a “back-flow valve” on the lowest drain(s). You can also use a plumber’s test plug to close these drains when not in use.
- Always make sure that your plumbing system vent pipe is not plugged. (bird and squirrel activity is often the cause)
- For further information about preventive measures, contact a plumber or plumbing supply dealer.

*What are the requirements for an irrigation meter?*

There are a few steps to obtaining an irrigation meter:

- First, have your plumber pull a permit at the Building Department;
- The homeowner must then come in to the Department of Public Works and fill out an application for a new meter. There is a \$200 fee for the meter, which is supplied by the Department.
- The Town will then supply the meter to plumber, who is responsible for installation.

*How do I split a service on my two-family house?*

Please see <http://www.watertowndpw.org/DocumentCenter/View/137/Splitting-a-Water-Service-PDF>.

## Highway

*Can I put another driveway on my lot?*

All requests for driveway extensions, new driveways, etc. must be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Enforcement Officer in the Department of Community Development and Planning. Additionally, Stormwater Management and Street Opening permits may be required by DPW.

*Who is responsible for Charles River Road, Greenough Boulevard, and Nonantum Road?*

Charles River Road and Greenough Boulevard are maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). DCR also maintains the section of North Beacon Street from Charles River Road to the Charles River and Arsenal Street from Greenough Boulevard to the Charles River.

*I reported a damaged concrete sidewalk. Why did DPW fill in the cracks with asphalt?*

We perform temporary repairs using asphalt. Damaged sidewalk panels are then put on a list and prioritized for permanent repair.

*How do I report a pothole, damaged sidewalk, etc.?*

You can create a service request at [Public Input \(mapsonline.net\)](http://mapsonline.net).

*Can I have my planting strip paved over?*

Per Town policy, we no longer pave planting strips.

*Can you install curbing in front of my house?*

The Town is unable to install curbing in front of individual houses. Curbing is only installed as part of roadway reconstruction projects.

## **Snow and Ice**

*When do you plow snow?*

Every storm is different, but usually salt is applied at the start of a storm. Generally, after 2 to 3-inches of snow has accumulated, plowing will begin. After the plowing process is completed, another application of salt may be necessary.

*Do you plow private ways?*

We plow certain private ways. Please note that private ways are plowed only to provide emergency access at the end of a storm.

*Do you plow sidewalks?*

We plow almost 15 miles of sidewalk in Town. Sidewalk plow routes are listed here ([School-Sidewalk-Routes-PDF \(watertowndpw.org\)](#)). We utilize two sidewalk tractors to plow our sidewalk list during and after snowstorms.

At the end of snowstorms, once all roadways have been cleared of snow for public safety, we then begin crosswalks and accessible ramps ([Bus-Stops-and-Crosswalks-PDF \(watertowndpw.org\)](#)). This work, which can require snow removal to our facility at Filippello Park, is done at night only. Using Town and contractor resources, it can take several nights to complete the list. After crosswalk and ramps are complete, we then clear bus stops.

*Why was my road not plowed from curb to curb?*

During a storm, our goal is to keep all roads passible, so many times total width plowing, intersections, and cul-de-sacs are not plowed until the storm is ending or has ended. Do not become alarmed if one area of your cul-de-sac or intersection has more snow after plowing than you see in another section. This is normal for our plowing sequence.

*Why do you fill up my driveway with snow?*

Our job is to keep the streets and sidewalks free of accumulating snow. Unfortunately, as a result of our snow plowing, the snow is deposited into everyone's driveways. We do not enjoy filling up your driveways, but it is our job to keep the streets and sidewalks safe for traffic. Please remember we are only doing our jobs so that you can safely use the streets and sidewalks.

*Why can't I park in the street overnight in the winter?*

For snow plowing, we need all vehicles off the streets so we can clear the snow from curb to curb. During night time and early morning hours, it is very difficult to see a parked car, due to the amount of snow being pushed ahead of the plow. For safety reasons, we ask that all cars be removed from the street. Any cars left on the street will be towed at the owner's expense.

*Where can I put the snow from my driveway?*

All snow from your property must remain on your property. It is illegal to put your snow in the road, across the street or on anyone else's property. Try to plan ahead and have a snow storage location for your snow.

## **Forestry**

*How does the Town respond to downed trees during a storm?*

We will remove all trees downed on our roads, if a tree falls from a resident's front yard, we will remove the tree from the road, but it is the residents responsibility to clean up their tree. If a tree is on any wires, we do not touch that tree, we wait for the utility company to remove the tree from the wires then we will remove the tree from the road. Call us at 617-972-6420 to report a down tree (or tree limb).

*What is a public shade tree?*

All trees within a public way or on the boundaries thereof as defined by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 87 [Chapter 87 \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov).

*May I prune or remove a public shade tree?*

No. Public shade trees shall not be cut, trimmed or removed, in whole or in part, by any person other than the tree warden or his deputy.

*How do I get a public shade tree planted in front of my house?*

Call us at 617-972-6420 or email the tree warden (with subject line: "New Tree Planting Request") to request a public shade tree in front of your house or in your front yard. Once a location and tree species are approved by the tree warden, the Town will pay for the tree and install the tree. The homeowner is responsible for watering the tree following installation.

*How do I get a public shade tree trimmed?*

Call us at 617-972-6420 or email the tree warden (with subject line "Prune Tree").

*How do I remove a public shade tree?*

Call us at 617-972-6420 or email the tree warden (with subject line: "Remove Dead Tree").

## Cemetery

*How do I pre-buy a cemetery plot?*

Due to space constraints, it is the Town's policy to not allow pre-need sale of cemetery plots.

## Permitting

*Why do I need a street opening permit to repave my driveway or to fix my sewer?*

Obtaining a street opening permit is necessary for several reasons. Any time work is done within the Town's Right of Way, the Town needs to ensure that all work is done per our specifications. The permit also notifies us that you are having work done that needs to be inspected by us to ensure your contractor has installed the material properly, and that you have not been taken advantage of. This is for your protection to ensure the job has been completed correctly.

*Who is responsible for obtaining the permit and what are the requirements?*

The permit must be obtained by the contractor performing the work, not the property owner. The contractor must supply an insurance certificate, naming the Town as additionally insured. A permit bond in the amount of \$10,000 valid for two years is also required. Permit applications must be filled out at the DPW office.

*How long does it take for a permit to be issued?*

Please allow up to 5 to 7 days for permit processing. As part of the review, the permit application is routed to the Town Treasurer Department for sign-off. If there are liens against the property, the Town Treasurer will not sign-off on the permit application.

*How do I get a dumpster permit?*

Dumpsters or PODS must be placed in a driveway so that they do not overhang the sidewalk. No permit is required for a dumpster placed in a driveway. The Town will only issue permits for dumpsters/PODS in the right-of-way in extenuating circumstances. Please call us at 617-972-6420 if you have questions.

## Other

*Who do I contact regarding a dead animal?*

Contact us at 617-972-6420. If the animal is in the street, the Town will remove it; if the animal is on private property, the Town will remove it if the animal is bagged and placed at the curb.

*Who do I contact to report street light outages?*

Contact us at 617-972-6420.

*Who do I contact to report power outages?*

Contact Eversource at 1-800-592-2000, use the Eversource mobile app or visit Eversource.com, or text “OUT” to 23129.

*Who do I contact if I smell gas?*

Contact National Grid at 1-800-233-5325.

*How do I report an emergency outside of working hours?*

Call 617-972-6420.

*What is the right-of-way?*

The right to cross land is known as “right of way”. This right can be on any land. If the right is granted to everyone, it is a “public right of way”. In general, the right-of-way extends from back-of-sidewalk to back-of-sidewalk, including the roadway, planting strip, and sidewalk.

*Where are my property lines? Is there an easement on my property?*

You can fill out a plan request and we will assemble any plans we have available. These maps will give you an approximate idea of the location of property lines, easements, underground utilities, etc. If you want the exact locations identified, you will need to hire a private surveyor.

*My neighbor is dumping water on my property from their downspouts, sump pump, etc. What should I do?*

Each property owner is responsible to maintain drainage paths on their individual property according to the overall drainage pattern for the area. Additionally a property owner is not to create a drainage concern for a neighboring property. When a dispute arises between property owners, it needs to be settled among the parties involved, as the properties in question are privately owned.

*Can you provide me with a plot plan of my property?*

We do not have plot plans on record at DPW. We recommend searching at the Registry of Deeds (<http://www.masslandrecords.com/MiddlesexSouth/>)

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