

Questions and Answers for the Week of May 26, 2020

Q: If the testing deadline [lateral pressure testing] for our home is this summer, will the deadline be pushed back due to covid-19 concerns or will fines start accumulating monthly?

A: *If the sale of the Sewer System is approved by City Council, the Greater Johnstown Water Authority (GJWA) will assume a greater role in enforcement of the pressure testing deadlines. The City has negotiated a 12 - month grace period for homeowners, commencing on the date the GJWA provides notice to the homeowner that the work is required to be completed, during which no surcharges will be imposed on the ratepayer. After the expiration of the 12-month period, GJWA is expected to begin to impose surcharges as it is very important that City property owners test their laterals and connect to the new system – the installation of which will have cost over \$100 million.*

It is not expected that the City will impose fines immediately following the testing deadline applicable to your property.

It would be best for your neighbors who have already undertaken their pressure testing, and all ratepayers, if your pressure testing and remediation were undertaken sooner, rather than later. Once surcharges, fines and enforcement of contracts begins, there is expected to be a high volume of requests for bids from plumbing contractors which could result in delays in receiving bids and higher costs to you. Residents of the City would be well advised to think about this Fall as being a good time to:

1. *Pressure test your lateral. Passing the pressure test can save you \$10 per month on your JRA bill.*
2. *If your lateral fails the test, contact at least two or three plumbing contractors to see whether your installation can qualify for slip lining or pipe bursting. These methods were recently authorized by City Council and if they work for your property, can save several thousand dollars. It is important that a qualified plumbing contractor carefully evaluates this method for your property, because if it does not work the traditional installation method will be required.*
3. *Apply for a low interest loan through the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority.*
4. *Apply for a subsidy through the City's Lateral Assistance Program (up to \$1,000 grant for qualified homeowners).*

The answer to your question is, that a reasonable period of time is expected to be given for you to complete the work in light of Covid-19 fallout and other considerations, but don't wait too long.