

The Oregonian

Northeast Portland Water Main Break Leaves Flooded Homeowner Wondering Who Will Pay

*By Fedor Zarkhin
March 18, 2018*

Ryan Humphrey was chatting Sunday with his neighbors in front of his driveway, which led down to an open garage, with faint green lines two feet high marking where the flood water had stopped.

The water from the 30-inch main that burst March 17 flooded his basement, Humphrey said, and he was just starting to assess the scope of the damage.

The multi-million gallon flood was the talk of the Northeast Portland neighborhood Sunday as people stood behind yellow tape and watched the Portland Water Bureau work, and neighbors described to each other in vivid detail the size of the previous day's geysers.

The break occurred around 11:30 a.m. Saturday near Northeast Skidmore Street and 23rd Avenue and flowed north at least four city blocks to Alberta Street and east for at least another five blocks near 27th Avenue. Authorities closed streets between Northeast 21st Avenue and 30th Avenues, evacuated residents in 12 homes and cut power to as many as 14,155 Pacific Power customers in the area as a precaution.

Humphrey said he was driving home that morning with his son and daughter after their swimming lessons when he saw water coming down Skidmore. He parked on the street and ran with his kids to the house.

The water was pouring down his driveway and into a drain in front of the garage door, which was closed, Humphrey said. He tried to block the water with a bag of rocks.

"It was not effective," Humphrey said.

The water kept flowing, he said, rising about two feet. It broke the garage door and rushed in, flooding the entire basement.

Now, Humphrey is busy with the aftermath. The first order of business is to remove anything that could mold, including drywall and carpet, he said. Overall, he expects the damage to cost about \$10,000 to \$15,000. The basement was carpeted and had a couch, television, washing machine and dryer. A chest full of family heirlooms was also caught in the flooding.

Most homeowner's insurance doesn't cover flooding, and it's uncommon for homeowners outside areas prone to flood to carry additional flood insurance. Humphrey said his insurer has already turned down his claim.

Humphrey said he is waiting to hear if the city of Portland will pay for the damage.

"They basically turned a non-flood area into a flood area," Humphrey said.

He said he has yet to hear back from the city's Risk Management division, which handles liability claims. The Oregonian/OregonLive couldn't reach the division Sunday.

Humphrey was also disappointed that nobody from the Portland Water Bureau came offered to help with the aftermath. About half a dozen neighbors helped Humphrey and his wife clear the

basement of water after the bulk had receded, he said, and he hasn't heard a word from the city agency.

In an email, a spokeswoman for the Portland Water Bureau said the department has been focused on preventing further damage to the neighborhood.

"We understand that this water main break has caused unexpected stress and difficulty for many people who live in Northeast Portland," spokeswoman Jaymee Cuti said.

It's unclear what caused the rupture, but Cuti said it was likely a combination of old age and pressure due to freezing and thawing of the ground this winter.

The flooding appeared to hit Humphrey's home particularly hard. Others in the neighborhood described narrowly missing disaster.

A city official asked Margaret Kennedy to evacuate Saturday as the water flowed past her home of 54 years on Skidmore Street. Kennedy stayed at her son's house in Wilsonville, not knowing if the water reached into her home. Her basement had flooded once before, she said.

When she came back Sunday morning, Kennedy found that the house had been spared. Still, there was work to do. The water had poured over her yard and flowerbeds, leaving rocks, small branches, and roots as it receded. She spent much of Sunday morning and afternoon cleaning up the mess.

"This is harder to clean off than volcanic ash," Kennedy said, recalling the aftermath of the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens.

Meeting Between Portland Police Chief, FBI Director Shrouded in Secrecy

*By Gordon Friedman
March 15, 2019*

On Aug. 8, 2018, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw met with Christopher Wray, the Federal Bureau of Investigations director. What was discussed or decided remains a mystery.

Outlaw and Wray were scheduled to spend 35 minutes together that balmy summer day, according to Outlaw's public calendar.

The meeting came at a time of increasing tension between the city and federal agencies because the city council appeared increasingly likely to withdraw from the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force. The city ultimately withdrew in February, sparking a rebuke from Renn Cannon, the FBI special agent in charge of the Oregon operations.

But what happened at the August meeting is unclear.

Noting the potential public interest in the meeting, a reporter for The Oregonian/OregonLive filed a public records request with the Portland Police Bureau for any documents about it. People have a right to inspect all government documents in Oregon with limited exceptions.

Five months later, city officials have given conflicting accounts of what records do or do not exist.

Police Bureau records supervisor Tammi Weiss first said no documents exist. She then said several photos from the meeting exist, but she did not provide them to the newsroom. She also

said neither she nor anyone else asked meeting attendees to comb their email accounts for documents.

A reporter told Weiss he did not believe a meeting between the police chief and FBI director would occur without a paper trail and asked Weiss to search again.

Jenifer Johnston, the senior deputy city attorney for records matters, later responded, saying officials “conducted a reasonable search” for records. She said The Oregonian/OregonLive would have to pay the city to conduct an email search. The going rate is usually several hundred dollars.

(The reporter also filed requests for documents about four other meetings between Outlaw, FBI officials and Mayor Ted Wheeler; the Police Bureau has produced one page in response.)

On Friday, The Oregonian/OregonLive asked police spokeswoman Terri Wallo-Strauss for information about the meeting location and nature of the discussion between Wray and Outlaw.

Wallo-Strauss responded by asking the newspaper to file a records request. The Oregonian/OregonLive refused because its reporter had not asked for documents, but rather an informal explanation of the meeting.

“We’ll ask that you put in for a public records request for that information, as it will have to be researched,” Wallo-Strauss said in an email. “I know it’s frustrating, it’s just our standardized process.”

Wallo-Strauss did not respond to a reporter asking to view the policy requiring submission of records requests for answers to questions.

Beth Anne Steele, spokeswoman for the FBI’s Oregon operations, said Friday that Outlaw met Wray during his visit to Portland’s FBI field office. The visits included “listening sessions” where Wray made remarks and took questions from about 50 law enforcement officials, Steele said.

On Tuesday Weiss provided one document related to the meeting: a picture of Lt. Chuck Lovell, the police chief’s senior assistant, and Wray, smiling and shaking hands.

Broken Pipe that Caused Major Flooding in NE Portland Could Take Days to Repair

By Everton Bailey Jr.

March 17, 2019

A broken Northeast Portland water pipe that caused millions of gallons of water to flood streets, homes and businesses near Alberta Street on Saturday could take several days to repair.

The Portland Water Bureau said Sunday the damaged 30-inch cast iron main could be replaced early this week. Crews worked throughout Saturday night and into Sunday morning to reduce the water flowing from the pipe enough to start digging toward it. The pipe was installed in the 1910s, according to the Water Bureau.

“This is some of the largest pipe in our system, resulting in more water and more pressure,” Water Bureau spokeswoman Jaymee Cuti said in a statement. “While we are making this repair, we plan to install a new valve, which will help ensure more shutdown options and dependability in the future.”

The break occurred around 11:30 a.m. Saturday near Northeast Skidmore Street and 23rd Avenue and flowed north at least four city blocks to Alberta Street and east for at least another five blocks near 27th Avenue. Authorities closed streets between Northeast 21st Avenue and 30th Avenues, evacuated residents in 12 homes and cut power to as many as 14,155 Pacific Power customers in the area as a precaution.

A full estimate on water damage is not yet clear as of Sunday morning. The electricity has since been restored, the evacuated residents have been allowed back into their homes and only small traces of the floodwater remain. The Portland Bureau of Transportation said it believes some of the roads in the area sustained enough damage that they may have to be rebuilt.

Some areas near the water pipe break remain closed to vehicle traffic Sunday. The damage caused by the water line break could lead to several roads needing to be replaced, said Dylan Rivera, a Portland Bureau of Transportation spokesman.

Skidmore Street between 23rd and 24th avenues will likely have to be rebuilt from “curb to curb,” he said. Road crews are waiting for the water line to be replaced before a full assessment of the damage can be done. The road repairs could possibly take weeks, Rivera said.

“We’re going to have to excavate five to 10 feet where the utilities are and replace the all the sand and rock that serve as a base for the pavement because all of that has been compromised,” Rivera said. “We can count on repairs being needed on Skidmore at this point, but beyond that will require more investigation.”

The Water Bureau said there isn’t any health risk for people in the area drinking tap water, but some sediment could cause changes to the smell, taste and look of the water in some places. Residents are advised to flush taps for up to two minutes until it clears if they notice discoloration and keep doing that if they continue to notice any issues.

The Portland Tribune

Broken Water Main Repair Work Underway

*By Jim Redden
March 17, 2019*

Large replacement pipe reaches flooded neighborhood Sunday afternoon, repairs expected to take days.

The massive pipe to replace the broken 30-inch water main in Northeast Portland arrived in the neighborhood Sunday afternoon.

The Saturday morning rupture of the 100-plus-year cast iron pipe was the largest in recent memory, the Portland Water Bureau said. Millions of gallons of water poured through the area, damaging homes and businesses, and forcing the power to be shut down for the safety of repair crews.

Repair work is expected to take days. All of the broken pipe will have to be dug out of the ground, and the walls of the dig site will need to be reinforced to prevent collapse. The replacement section will then to be lowered and welded into place. The pit will then have to be filled, and the street repaved.

The bureau says this winter's series of freezes, thaws and refreezes may have contributed to the rupture, which rarely happens in such a large pipe.

The break happened around noon on March 16 at Northeast 23rd Avenue and Northeast Skidmore Street, causing water to spurt out at 1 million gallons per minute. Officials were able to finally slow the flow that evening.

Neighbors Cheryl and Peter Alto said they heard a "pop" and within about 20 minutes, the water was at their steps and rushing into a neighbor's garage.

"Came out and it was just very surreal, a reflection of all the water and it just happened very quickly," Cheryl said.

Twelves homes were evacuated and residents watched helplessly as water poured into homes and surrounded cars.

"This is wild," neighbor Michael Vitti said. "I've never seen anything like it before that's a lot of water coming out of there."

Marnie Freeman thought someone hit a fire hydrant at first but soon realized it was much bigger.

"It reminds me of when we had that fire in the Gorge," she said. "It gives me that same sensation. And I can't help to think of that sinkhole that is forming that's what I'm most nervous about."

Officials warned people to stay out of the water because it could weaken surfaces or hide open manhole covers.

"We've asked people to stay away from the water," Lt. Rich Chatman with Portland Fire and Rescue said. "It really is our primary message to stay nowhere near the water. We have a lot of hazards involved. We've got open manhole covers and we aren't sure of the stability of the ground in a lot of these areas."

The water bureau said that when a main that size fails, customers might see dirty or brown water coming out of faucets. That's because sediment is being stirred up in the system. There is no health hazard from the water, but people in the neighborhood are still being advised not to touch the standing water.

"Sediment is always in our system but is only visible when a change in flow is enough to disturb the sediment. Customers may choose to drink bottled water while waiting for discoloration to clear," the bureau tweeted. They added that a water main break of this magnitude is a very rare event.

About 10,000 Pacific Power customers living in and around the area of the water main break lost power around 11:15 a.m. The utility said it "de-energized power lines in the area" at the request of PF&R as crews worked to fix the pipe. Most power was restored by the next morning.

"We want to thank customers for their patience in this unusual situation as we work with the city," said David Lucas, Pacific Power vice president of operations, in a press release. "Safety has to come first. Flooding basements, many of which contain circuit breakers, is a major risk. We urge everyone to be cautious and we will return service as soon as we safely can."

Willamette Week

Thousands of Portland Public School Students Stage Walkout Against Climate Change

*By Elise Herron
March 15, 2019*

“We cannot let this madness go on any longer.”

Thousands of Portland high school and middle school students walked out of class today to protest climate change.

The walkout is part of a national day of action of young people demanding the reduction and reversal of global warming.

Jaden Winn, a Portland Public Schools student and founder of the organization Youth Igniting Change, says, "We are just one of the thousands of youth-led climate strikes putting pressure on government officials to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thus ensuring a habitable planet and a sustainable future for generations to come."

Video of the walkout shows students marching along the waterfront and across the steel bridge, signs that read "There's No Planet B," and "We're Missing Our Lessons So We Can Teach You One," in hand.

Chants of "Climate Strike" and "Climate Justice" echoed through the large mass of students as they made their way downtown.

A Century-Old Portland Water Main Turned Into Old Faithful, and It Could Take Several Days to Fix

*By Allison Place
March 17, 2019*

It's part of a crumbling utility infrastructure that has long caused headaches—and sewage-soaked basements—for Portlanders.

Portland Water Bureau officials expect repairs to stretch into this week after a 30-inch cast iron pipe burst Saturday morning and sent millions of gallons of water flooding into Northeast Portland streets.

Portland Fire & Rescue says water gushed from the pipe at an astonishing 1 million gallons per minute. The pipe burst at NE 23rd Avenue and NE Skidmore Street.

Rhetta Drennan, a Water Bureau spokeswoman, told OPB the 30-inch pipe was installed in 1915. That makes it part of a crumbling utility infrastructure that has long created headaches—and sewage-soaked basements—for Portlanders.

Portland Water Bureau spokeswoman Jaymee Cuti says that the age of the pipe was a factor in the main break, but the official cause of the break is still not determined.

Water officials spent much of last night trying to stanch the flow enough to excavate the pipe. Water service hasn't been effected, because the pipe is a transmission main and not a service man, bureau officials said.

"We have continued to make gains against water flow, but more is needed," said Maintenance and Construction Director Ty Kovatch in a statement. "The work will take time. We will get it done!"

First responders arrived on the scene around 11:30 am Saturday, as the broken main began gushing like a geyser.

Twelve homes were initially evacuated due to basements flooding, though those residents were allowed back into their homes later in the afternoon.

The Portland Water Bureau said that the tap water in the affected areas is drinkable, although it might have some harmless sediment in it.

At around 1 pm, Pacific Power cut electrical service at the request of the Portland Fire Department to parts of Northeast Portland following the flood, with approximately 10,000 residents still without power as of 4 pm. The outage ran from Northeast 18th Avenue to Northeast 47th avenue, and from NE Thompson to Columbia Boulevard.

In a statement, Pacific Power said that "power restoration will be very labor intensive and may take more time than a normal power outage."

By 7 pm, gas and power was restored.

"We cannot stress this enough: stay out of the water," Mayor Ted Wheeler said at a 2 pm press conference. "Let people do the work they need to do to address the situation as quickly as possible."

Open manhole covers and potentially contaminated water were cited as reasons residents should not wade in the water.

The Portland Mercury

Portland Youth Call on Climate Global Climate Strike at City Hall

*By Kathleen Marie and Alex Zielinski
March 15, 2019*

Hundreds of Portland youth met in front of city hall this morning to demand a more aggressive response to climate change at all levels of government.

"This is about our future, our children's future, our planet's future," one high school student shouted through a megaphone over the cheering crowd. "If you don't act like adults, we will!"

The event, like the hundreds taking place in cities across the globe today, was completely organized and orchestrated by youth. High schoolers made up the majority of the group, but middle school and elementary students (accompanied by parents) also joined the throngs.

The students leading the rally leant their mic to only one adult speaker, Portland Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who has supported this movement from the beginning.

"You are exactly what we have been waiting for," Hardesty told the group. "Leadership comes in all ages, it comes in all colors, it comes in all cultures. I have never been prouder to represent the city of Portland than I have today. We hear you, keep it up!"

With handmade signs, synchronized chants, and bright face paint, the crowd of young activists flooded into the street and ignited a march along the Portland waterfront.

Serena, a Wilson High School student, said she joined today's march because she's tired of being ignored by politicians.

"It hurts me that we have solutions and yet we are denying the right to use them," she told the Mercury. "I feel like we can push for a better future. There are things we can do."

Asked why she thinks those solutions aren't being acted on, Serena didn't hesitate.

"Money. Scientists have come up with solutions but corporations have shot them down because they don't make them money."

The Skanner

Proud Boy, Arrested in Connection with June Assault, Pleads Not Guilty

March 14, 2019

A member of the right-wing Proud Boys group pleaded not guilty Wednesday to felony third-degree assault and misdemeanor fourth-degree assault in connection with the June attack of a man in Oregon, the Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Earlier this week 23-year-old Donovan Lyle Flippo of Vancouver, Washington, was arrested on a warrant Tuesday in Clark County, Washington, a day after Mayor Ted Wheeler complained that law enforcement was basically ignoring violent protests in the city and failing to arrest violent activists. He faces charges of third-degree assault, a felony, and fourth-degree assault, a misdemeanor. It wasn't clear if he had an attorney.

Portland Police Bureau Lt. Tina Jones said Wednesday that the arrest happened outside their jurisdiction and therefore they are unable to comment.

Multnomah County Circuit Judge Karin Immergut ordered Flippo on Wednesday to have no contact with the man who was attacked or the co-defendant, Tusitala "Tiny" Toese, while the case is pending.

Toese, another Proud Boy member, hasn't yet been arrested. He and Flippo appear together in many social media posts and often attend right-wing demonstrations in Portland.

Flippo and Toese were indicted last month after a 35-year-old man said Flippo and another man shouted homophobic slurs at him before punching him in the face.

The man said he was waiting to cross the street at a stoplight June 8 when he saw Toese, Flippo and a third man in a truck. The man said the men in the truck were yelling things about Trump, and shouting, "Build the wall!" He said he motioned at them with his hand or arm, trying to dismiss them. As he crossed the street, he said they yelled homophobic slurs at him so he shouted an expletive back at Toese, calling him by his nickname "Tiny."

When the man got to the other corner, he said he saw Toese and Flippo get out of the truck and rush toward him. The man said he had a minor concussion and went to the hospital, where he received stitches for a split lip.

Flippo said he didn't know the man, according to court records.

Another Vancouver man posted 10 percent of Flippo's \$7,500 bail and he was released from custody Tuesday night, court and jail records show.

When asked by a reporter if Flippo had any comment about his arrest and indictment as he left court with three other men, he said, "No, ma'am," and walked away.

On Monday, Wheeler called for a change to laws if they don't allow police officers to arrest brawlers and vowed that anyone fighting will not go unpunished.

Wheeler also said prosecutors were being too timid and not enforcing existing law.

Wheeler mentioned an Oct. 13 fight outside a downtown bar in which members of the right-wing group Patriot Prayer and left-wing Antifa used fists, batons and even bear mace. Police were present but did not attempt any arrests.

Wheeler said officials in Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill's office told mayoral aides that prosecutors could do nothing because the law allows for "mutual combat" between people fighting.

"That was an unacceptable answer for me," Wheeler said.

The police department is under scrutiny after it was revealed last month that a lieutenant in charge of containing protests texted repeatedly with the leader of Patriot Prayer, detailing the movement of a rival protest group.

Brent Weisberg, a spokesman for Underhill, said prosecutions are "incredibly complex" and some elements have been oversimplified "by individuals other than prosecutors."

Sometimes prosecutors cannot determine the initial aggressor, he said, making it legally and ethically questionable to file charges.

OPB

Big Crowd Turns Out In Portland For Youth Climate Action Rally

*By Erin Ross and David Steves
March 15, 2019*

Portland students joined the worldwide Global Climate Strike demonstration Friday to call on leaders to do something about climate change.

Between 1,500 and 2,000 young people skipped school to chant, wave signs and speak out at a gathering outside Portland City Hall. The crowd overflowed from the sidewalk, prompting police to close the street.

It was one of more than 1,700 such protests planned in 112 countries.

Reynolds High School student Victoria Clark says she came out to show what an urgent issue climate change is for her and many other young people.

"I'm here today because we only have so long to fix what is going on with our climate," she said.

The burning of fossil fuels like coal and petroleum have produced billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, which trap heat in the atmosphere. This is causing average temperatures to rise — with consequences that range from more intense winter storms, rising sea

levels, melting glaciers and ice caps, longer wildfire seasons, and changes in the ocean's chemistry.

Scientists have been warning about climate change since the 1980s, well before most of the Portland protest's participants were born.

Jaden Winn, a sophomore at Wilson High School, said the global demonstration by people his age illustrated how his parents generation and those before them have not stepped up.

"They're not doing what they need to do. That's been left to us," Winn said in an interview with OPB's "Think Out Loud" host Dave Miller.

The students hope that by protesting, they'll provide a face to the climate crisis and motivate legislators to act. Many referenced the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which warned in October that we may only have 12 years to act on climate change and limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Participants in the Portland event wore shirts and held signs that said, "We have until I'm 24 to stop this" and "I'll be 20 when the damage is irreversible."

Charlie Abrams, a 15-year-old freshman at Cleveland High School, has been a climate activist since he was 11. He told "Think Out Loud" that he was encouraged by the vast number of youths who turned out for Friday's event. He said he's seen a dramatic increase in the level of activism by his generation to do something about the threat of climate change.

"We're not only the ones affected by this the most, but our voice stands out in a crowd of adults," he said.

The rally was scheduled to last until noon, followed by a march. But by 11:30 a.m. the crowd had grown so large that City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty ended the rally. Then the students marched a few blocks to Tom McCall Waterfront Park. When the march began, the crowd stretched for several city blocks.

Portland Public Schools leaders say that while they encourage students to be engaged politically, any students who walk out will be marked as absent. But students say that walking out of school makes a bigger impact.

"I know people will say that we're just skipping school, that we're just being lazy. But we're taking the action that legislators won't," Clark said.

Power Restored After Portland's Alberta Neighborhood Floods

By Meerah Powell
March 16, 2019

UPDATE (Sunday, March 17 at 1:15 p.m.) — Portland Water Bureau officials continue to work Sunday on excavating and replacing a broken water main which flooded the Alberta neighborhood in Northeast Portland the day before.

A related power outage, at its peak, left nearly 12,000 Pacific Power customers without electricity.

Pacific Power restored service to most homes in the Alberta neighborhood Saturday night around 7 p.m.

Flood water closed several streets between Northeast 21st and 30th avenues, and Alameda to Northeast Rosa Parks Way, according to Portland Fire and Rescue. City officials advised people to avoid the area and stay out of the water Saturday while crews worked to stem the flow of water.

People stand next to flood waters in the Alberta neighborhood of Portland, Ore., Saturday, March 16, 2019. A water main break caused millions of gallons of water to rush the streets of the Northeast Portland neighborhood.

People stand next to flood waters in the Alberta neighborhood of Portland, Ore., Saturday, March 16, 2019. A water main break caused millions of gallons of water to rush the streets of the Northeast Portland neighborhood.

Rhett Drennan, public information officer with the Portland Water Bureau, said the break occurred at about 11:30 a.m. Saturday just east of Northeast 23rd Avenue and Skidmore Street. She said crews were on-site to shut off the main Saturday afternoon.

“The [water] line was a 30-inch cast iron main that was installed in 1915,” Drennan said. “Right now, we know there have been at least 10 houses that have been evacuated. There’s water in some of the basements and we know there is electricity off in some of the blocks here.”

Drennan said crews will not know the cause of the main break until it can be evaluated. That won’t happen until the water is shut off. Water was still flowing from the break Sunday morning, according to the Portland Water Bureau.

“We have continued to make gains against water flow, but more is needed. The work will take time,” said Maintenance and Construction Director Ty Kovatch in a press release.

Officials say the work to excavate the broken 30-inch transmission pipe is expected to last into early next week. Because the pipe is a transmission line, not a service line, officials say no residents are without water.

They did advise that some sediment may be visible in residents’ tap water, but that it’s not harmful to anyone’s health. Officials recommend flushing all of your taps for at least 2 minutes until the water runs clear.

As for the roads where the flooding occurred, the Portland Bureau of Transportation said it will have to rebuild streets in the area of Skidmore and 23rd. Officials are asking people to avoid the area for now.