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Media Release

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Portland Water Bureau Crews Respond to Water Main Break at SE Powell Boulevard and SE 20th Avenue

PORTLAND, OR – The Portland Water Bureau reports a water main break at SE Powell Boulevard at SE 20th Avenue.

At 3:30 am this morning, a 20-inch in diameter cast iron pipe installed in 1931 ruptured, causing water to flow into the immediate area. Water Bureau crews are onsite shutting down water. It is unknown at this time how many customers may be out of water.

Due to the size and location of the pipe, some customers may experience discolored water. Customers are encouraged to run water until it clears. Currently, there is no estimate as to how long the repairs will take.

The Water Bureau's Maintenance & Construction crews are called out all hours day and night to repair broken water mains, an average of 200 times a year. In Portland, cast iron water mains tend to break during the colder times of the year. Cold water can cause pipes to become more brittle. Adding freezing temperatures such as what Portlanders have experienced in the past few days can cause the ground above a pipe to freeze, thereby increasing external stress on a pipe. Temperatures can be just one factor in causing a main break; the age of a pipe, soil conditions, pipe corrosion and ground movement can cause a main to weaken over time and break.

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February 10, 2014

Update 10:00 AM

Water Bureau crews completed backfill of the repaired area yesterday. The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) will restore the street, weather permitting.

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Update 5:00 PM

Just after 8:30 AM this morning, Portland Water Bureau Maintenance & Construction crews successfully excavated and exposed the water main break, which revealed that the 20-inch cast iron main - which was installed in 1931 - had broken horizontally down the length of the pipe.

Throughout the morning and into this afternoon, Water Bureau crews cut out and replaced an estimated 16-foot section of damaged pipe. Crews are now working to backfill the work site with several dump truck loads of rock.

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Update 10:00 AM

Just before 10:00 AM, SE Powell Boulevard, between SE 14th Avenue and SE 20th Avenue, reopened after being closed due to standing water from an earlier water main break at SE 20th Avenue at SE Powell Boulevard.

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Update 9:15 AM

Just after 8:30 AM, Portland Water Bureau Maintenance & Construction crews located the 83-year old 20-inch cast iron pipe that ruptured, causing a water main break on SE 20th Avenue at SE Powell Boulevard.

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Update 8:00 AM

The water main break at SE 20th Avenue at SE Powell Boulevard has caused water to accumulate on SE Powell Boulevard beneath the SE 17th Avenue overpass. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has closed SE Powell Boulevard between SE 14th and SE 20th due to the slowly draining standing water.

Traffic will be detoured as SE Powell Boulevard will be closed eastbound at SE 14th Avenue and westbound at SE 20th Avenue. ODOT estimates that SE Powell Boulevard will reopen within the next two hours.

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Update 6:28 AM

The water shutdown is complete. Work is estimated to take all day and into tonight.