

LCA Water Service – Customer Troubleshooting Guide

TOPIC: Low Pressure or No Water

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your water pressure suddenly decreases in all fixtures in your home and you also hear the sound of water running in your basement or outside along the street line, please call LCA's Customer Care Department at 610-398-1444 (suburban customers) or 610-437-7515 (Allentown customers) immediately to report a possible water main break!

Overview of Water Pressure

Lehigh County Authority (LCA) seeks to provide all customers with a reliable source of safe drinking water, and providing adequate water pressure is an important component of our service to you. In most areas, the amount of water pressure you receive depends on where you live in relation to the rest of our water system facilities. Homes that are up on a hill receive lower pressure, and homes down in a valley receive higher pressure.

This variation in pressure is because our water flows through our pipes by gravity. The further up a hill the water has to flow to get to your home, the slower it moves as it reaches your home, and the water pressure drops.

Water pressure is measured as pounds per square inch (PSI). Normal pressure falls within a range of 20 to 80 PSI. Some customers who normally receive low water pressure (say 20 – 35 PSI) may prefer to have high pressure inside their home. In that case, you could have a plumber install a Booster Pump to increase the water pressure to the home, or your home may already have one installed by a prior owner or the original builder.

Customers who live in low-lying areas may have pressure that is higher than 80 PSI, in which case you could have a plumber install a Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV) to reduce the water pressure inside the home, or your home may already have one installed by a prior owner or the original builder.



Pressure Reducing Valve (PRV)

Whatever your water pressure is, it is unlikely to change much from LCA's water system, unless we are experiencing a systemwide problem like a water main break. So, if you notice fluctuations in water pressure inside your home, there's usually a reason for it!

When investigating a drop in pressure, or a sudden loss of all water service, we find that it is often caused by a plumbing issue inside the home. This troubleshooting guide will give you some ideas about where to check.

Plumbing Checklist

The first thing to do is to take a look around your home to find out what you have in place to begin with! Do you have a booster pump or PRV? How about a water softener or water filter? These are all possible problem areas that could be causing a drop in water pressure.

Here are some items to look for and try:

Water Softener: Sometimes a water softener can malfunction or lines will get clogged, causing a reduction in water pressure. Try turning the water softener off and/or bypassing it. If your water pressure goes back up to normal, you know your softener is the culprit and requires maintenance.

Water Filtration System: If you have an in-line water filter, when was the last time you changed the cartridge? Check it out and see if the pressure improves.

PRV: If you have a Pressure Reducing Valve, it may need to be adjusted, or it may be clogged or “stuck.” Sometimes tapping on the PRV lightly with a rubber mallet, or adjusting the nut on top of the PRV will alleviate the problem. If you tap on the PRV and hear a sudden swoosh of water going through, you know the PRV was stuck and the problem has probably been corrected.

Booster Pump: If you have a pump to boost pressure, make sure it is plugged in and working!

Water Shut-Off Valve: Believe it or not, but LCA technicians often visit customers who are complaining that they have “no water” or very low pressure, only to find out that the main water valve inside the home had been inadvertently turned off. This happens most often when the meter is located near other fixtures you may be using such as a water heater or laundry room, or if the meter is located in an area where kids and pets have free access. Find your water meter and look for the valve next to it and make sure it’s in the open position.



Typical water meter installation with shut-off valve open.

Fixtures & Screens: Check the water pressure at different fixtures throughout the home, upstairs, downstairs, kitchen, bathrooms, etc. Is the water pressure low everywhere or just one fixture? Make sure to check different types of fixtures such as a kitchen sink versus a bathtub faucet. If you have decreased only at some sinks, but not all fixtures, you probably have a blockage somewhere. The best place to start is to remove the screens from the kitchen or bathroom faucets to see if there is any grit in the screen blocking the flow. If so, flush out the faucet and clean the screens before reinstalling them and see if that helps. NOTE: Since bathtub faucets usually do not have screens, that’s a good place to check for water pressure since there should be no obstructions at this location.

Sputtering Flow or “Bubbly” or “Milky” Water: If you experienced a minor disruption in service due to system maintenance LCA was conducting, or any plumbing work you are doing in your home, you may experience a bit of sputtering at your faucets or water that looks bubbly or milky. This is just a bit of air in your line that you can remove by flushing it out. Let the water run for a bit to see if it clears up.

When to Call LCA?

First of all, you should call us immediately at 610-398-1444 (suburban customers) or 610-437-7515 (Allentown customers) any time you suspect a water main break or a water quality problem! For your calls about low pressure or “no water” we will be happy to walk you through this checklist over the phone and answer any additional questions you may have! If you require a site visit after going through this guide, we are happy to come out and try to help, but a \$50 site visit fee will be applied to your account (\$150 for after-hours site visits), unless LCA equipment failure has caused the problem.