



What's required

Every year, a hydrant is required to be flushed and checked with a gauge to make sure it's fully operational. Every 5 years, in order to maintain the NCDOT fire ratings, the health of the hydrants are evaluated with a full test.

Firefighters take a pressure reading with no water moving, then they need to flow a nearby hydrant at its maximum capacity. This allows us to calculate the maximum capacity and health of the hydrant. Every year we test 20% of our total hydrants with this procedure.

What you'll see....

Every year from September through November we will flow test and/or perform maintenance on all fire hydrants in the city limits. We'll notify the public through our Social media and town media outlets every year prior to us beginning this project.

There is a chance that sediment may be stirred up in your area due to testing. This may appear as discolored water. It's recommended that you flush your water and refrain from laundry until your water runs clear. Testing times will be M-F 9am to 5pm, we do not test on holidays.

Key points

- We maintain over 800 fire hydrants.
- Every year, each one must be checked for operational status.
- Every 5 years, each hydrant must be tested to verify its health.
- Water usage does cost the town, however the alternative is higher insurance rates.
- We make every attempt to minimize waste and inconveniences to the public with notification of testing.

Contact Us

Phone:
(910) 278-1000



Web: www.facebook.com/oakislandfire/
www.oakislandnc.com/departments/fire-department/



OAK ISLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

8510 E Oak Island Dr.
Oak Island, NC 28465



Hydrant Testing

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FIRE
DEPARTMENT**

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Why test hydrants

It's our responsibility.

When your local fire department is evaluated for its ratings, there are several variables that are taken into account, weighted and added up. Categories such as training standards, fire apparatus capabilities, personnel and communications capabilities are evaluated. Hydrant capabilities and their maintenance contribute to the overall rating.

An independent, unbiased party evaluates everything, calculates and arrives at a number. This number is then issued to the fire department, known as an ISO rating.

ISO (Insurance Service Office) Rating.

This number directly affects insurance ratings. The insurance ratings play a factor in costs for everyone in the town, both private residences and businesses. By conducting programs such as the hydrant testing we can improve or maintain our rating, which in turn lowers or keeps in check insurance premium costs for our taxpayers.

Maintaining our Rating

These numbers can potentially fluctuate up or down and require that the fire department meet its goals of annual maintenance and periodic testing (every 5 years) of hydrants, required to get full credit for its rating. Any missed goals can lower insurance ratings and subsequently increase insurance premiums for everyone residing in the town.

What are the costs associated?

Ultimately the tax payers pay for the water being used. The fire department tries to minimize the cost. Every year the water lines have to be flushed when the water system changes the type of disinfectants added to the water supply. There are guidelines, defined by the state, to protect the public water supply that water departments are held to.

The fire department coordinates it's time to do hydrant flushing with the water department, in order to waste less water.



Within the fire department, we coordinate our database, so that every hydrant is tested and no work is duplicated. We also coordinate in the field with radios, so that we're not using more water than needed to perform our tasks. We do leave large puddles, but each hydrant valve has to be turned several revolutions to be completely open, to calculate its maximum flow then observed and data recorded.

Why else do we test hydrants?

There are several reasons. When firefighters respond to a fire, time is critical. Each hydrant near the fire needs to be capable of adequately supplying water. Firefighters will require a certain quantity and capacity of water to suppress and ultimately extinguish the fire.

The North Carolina Department of Insurance (NCDI) is an agency that rates fire departments and requires that fire hydrants be inspected for proper operation at least once a year. The flow rates of each hydrant are required to be tested every 5 years.

What do we inspect?

When firefighters inspect hydrants they look for a couple of key factors;

That the hydrant readily accessible; Firefighters require immediate access to the hydrant. Hydrants obstructed by vegetation, fences, structures, etc., hamper firefighting efforts. A minimum of 36" around the hydrant must be cleared of all obstructions. This allows quick location and access, enough space to attach hoses and free area for wrenches to remove caps and fully turn valves.

While inspecting hydrants, valves will also be lubed to ensure proper operation. Hydrant caps also will be lubed so that they are freely removed.

