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- [Ways to Pay Your Bill](#)
- [Account Information](#)
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- [Water Rates](#)
- [Property Managers and Trade Professionals](#)

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- [Drinking Water](#)
- [Wastewater](#)
- [Stormwater](#)
- [Harbor Water](#)

THE WATERSHED

- [Watershed Protection](#)
- [Watershed Recreation](#)

CITYWIDE INITIATIVES

- [Regulatory Reform](#)
- [Environmental Education](#)
- [Conservation Programs](#)
- [Air Pollution Control](#)
- [Noise Codes & Complaints](#)

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- [Forms & Permits](#)
- [Doing Business with DEP](#)
- [Asbestos Abatement](#)

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DEP Issues Safety Alert on Opening Fire Hydrants

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection would like to remind New Yorkers that opening fire hydrants without spray caps is illegal, wasteful and dangerous. Illegally opened hydrants can lower water pressure and put lives at risk if there is a fire. Children can also be at serious risk, because the powerful force of an open hydrant without a spray cap can knock a child down, causing serious injury.

The unauthorized opening of New York City fire hydrants often spikes during heat waves. Firefighters need adequate water pressure to put out fires. Opening a hydrant without a spray cap lowers water pressure and can hinder firefighting by reducing the flow of water to hoses and pumps. The reduction of water pressure resulting from illegally opened hydrants can also cause problems at hospitals and other medical facilities. Opening a hydrant illegally can result in fines of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 30 days, or both. New Yorkers should call 311 to report open fire hydrants.

Hydrants can be opened legally if equipped with a City-approved spray cap. One illegally opened hydrant generally releases more than 1,000 gallons of water per minute, while a hydrant with a spray cap releases 20 to 25 gallons per minute. Spray caps can be obtained by an adult 18 or over, free of charge, at local firehouses.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. NYC Water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. The in-city distribution network consists of 6,600 miles of tunnels and water mains, and includes approximately 109,000 fire hydrants throughout the five boroughs. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.