

# CURRENTS

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

A donation to PWSA's Hardship Grant Program will help neighbors struggling to pay for essential water services

► Pittsburgh is a city rich with the traditions of community, friendliness, and neighborliness, especially during the holiday season. From coat, sweater, and toy drives to nursing home visits and more, our city is one that is full of helpers, with many of us finding a way to support our neighbors and our community.

No one should have to choose between paying their water bill and other essential expenses. Unfortunately, however, there are customers that find themselves in that position.

PWSA is proud to announce an additional way Pittsburghers can help support their neighbors: **by donating to our Hardship Grant Program, your tax-deductible contribution will directly benefit local families who are struggling to pay for essential water services.**

Since 2018, the **Hardship Grant Program has helped over 850 income-eligible households maintain essential water services.** We've distributed over \$200,000 through the program and award an average household grant of \$229.



Your donation to the Hardship Grant Program will be distributed in the form of financial aid to our income-eligible customers receiving water and sewer services. Grants are dispersed on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible families with a gross household income that is at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, meaning a family of four making \$41,625 qualifies for assistance. Households can apply for a grant up to \$300 every 12 months.

The Hardship Grant Program is administered by Dollar Energy Fund. You can donate online at [www.dollarenergy.org/donations/pwsa](http://www.dollarenergy.org/donations/pwsa), by calling 412-431-2800, or by mailing a check to: Dollar Energy Fund, Inc., PO Box 42329, Pittsburgh, PA 15203. Please indicate that your donation is to be directed to the Hardship Grant Program.

PWSA administers a variety of other Customer Assistance Programs to income-qualified residential customers, including the Bill Discount Program and

Winter Shut Off Moratorium. For more information or to apply, please visit our [Customer Assistance Program website](#).

The past few years have certainly underscored how important it is to lend a helping hand to those in need. This holiday season, PWSA hopes you will consider donating to the Hardship Grant Program and helping a neighbor. For more information about the Hardship Grant Program, please visit our [website](#). ♦

## Chief Executive Officer Briefing by Will Pickering

### Creating contractor connections and prioritizing business with diverse enterprises



▶ Supplier diversity is a topic of critical importance for PWSA, and something we prioritize every time we engage with third parties for contracting opportunities.

Investing in diverse business enterprises – known as Minority, Women, and Disadvantaged

Business Enterprises or simply MWDBEs – is a no brainer. This sort of investment helps our local and regional economy by creating meaningful job opportunities, encouraging small business growth, and keeping money in our region.

There are many opportunities for contractors to partner with PWSA in the upcoming years considering the historic investments we're making to transform Pittsburgh's water system. To build those relationships and highlight how MWDBE vendors and other regional businesses can participate, we recently held a Contracting Forum in partnership with the African

American Chamber of Commerce of Western PA.

The Forum, attended by about 60 business leaders, highlighted upcoming contracting opportunities for critical water and sewer infrastructure projects. We also hosted a panel discussion with select contractors, who shared potential teaming opportunities and how diverse business enterprises can be prepared to bid on future work.

We remain committed to meeting our supplier diversity program goal of awarding 10% – 25% of all contracts to MWDBE businesses. In 2021, the total amount allocated to MWDBE

businesses on board-approved contracts was more than \$31 million, or 18% of total contract spending. This represents 76 MWDBE vendors with a total economic output of more than \$53 million. More information on our performance is found in our [Supplier Diversity Annual Report](#).

If you're a diverse business interested in contracting with PWSA, please visit our [Bids & Opportunities webpage](#). Vendors are also invited to [schedule an appointment during supplier diversity virtual office hours](#) to discuss any questions around doing business with PWSA or our supplier diversity program. ♦

## TEAM PGH20

## Employee Spotlight: Maria Michalek

▶ *Dispatch Coordinator Maria Michalek and her team of Dispatchers are on PWSA's front lines, fielding urgent water and sewer emergencies for customers that call into our emergency dispatch line 24/7/365. We sat down with Maria to learn more about her and her work and, with the holidays upon us, reaffirm for our customers who they should contact in a potential water or sewer emergency.*

**Why do you like working for PWSA?** I have a unique connection to PWSA, one that goes back through my family history. My great-grandfather, Nunziato Liberto, worked as a Laborer for what was then the city's water department from 1936 – 1956. My grandfather,

Nunzio Liberto, was a Plant Foreman for the city and then for PWSA from 1956 – 1998. My grandfather still reminisces about this time, and I always love hearing his stories. In a way, they paved the way for me to work for a great organization.

**What sort of impact do you hope to have at PWSA?** I hope our customers leave any interaction with us with the confidence that we have their best interests in mind. The tightly knit Dispatch team is made up of caring, empathetic individuals, and we try to address every situation as if we were helping a family member.

**What are your favorite challenges to tackle?** I love when I'm able to take an

incoming customer issue, troubleshoot the problem, and provide a successful solution. The sense of relief that I hear from their voice makes it all worth it!

**What's an interesting fact that we don't know about you?** I've always loved to travel any chance I get! Whether that's around the United States or internationally, experiencing new places gives me such joy, especially with my family in tow.

**How can customers report emergencies during the holiday season?** The quickest way for customers to report emergencies is to dial 412-255-2423 and press 1 to report your emergency at any time. Examples of emergencies



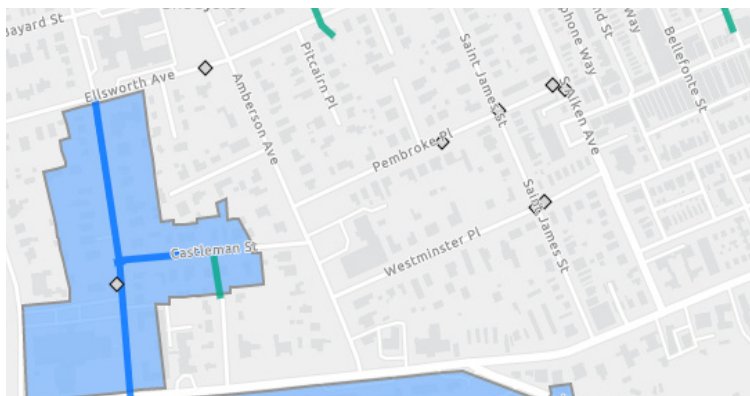
include low or no water pressure, a suspected water main break, or a sewage backup. Customers with a non-emergency issue (such as billing or general questions), can call Customer Service at 412-255-2423 (press 5) during normal business hours, Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., or simply fill out our [Report an Issue](#) webform online. ♦

## Sidewalk and Surface Restoration Update

► PWSA's annual street and sidewalk restoration contract handles street, sidewalk, and landscaping restoration at all previous PWSA work locations and at many contractor sites.

When we repair or replace infrastructure assets — like a water or sewer main — the location is added to our list of restoration sites. A crew will then be dispatched to add a temporary concrete sidewalk pad or asphalt to the site. That temporary restoration will be permanently replaced. However, due to the volume of work in process, customers can expect to wait several weeks, or sometimes months, for permanent restoration.

In 2022, we've restored more than 800 sites. About one third



of these sites required both asphalt roadway and concrete sidewalk work at the same time.

As winter weather approaches, making it too cold to install asphalt or concrete, work on this contract will slow, with only emergency locations and some temporary restoration being completed. Some locations added later in the year and

those added over the winter will be logged and put on hold until the spring of 2023.

To see if a work location is slated for restoration in your neighborhood, please visit our [interactive project map](#). Look for the grey squares (see the photo above), which denote restoration sites. ♦

## PGH2O IN THE COMMUNITY

### Reporting Water Emergencies this Holiday



► Winter is here and the holidays are just around the corner. The holiday season is a wonderful time to relax, spend time with friends and family, participate in holiday traditions, contribute to a charitable cause like our [Hardship Grant Program](#), and more, but what happens when unexpected emergencies strike? If you experience an unexpected water outage, it's always helpful

to check our [Service Outages page](#) where we have active and upcoming service outages listed with a map of affected locations for your convenience.

If you don't see your location listed, or have another type of emergency to report, call our 24/7 Emergency Dispatch line at 412-255-2423 (press 1) for all water or sewer emergencies.

Examples of emergencies include low or no water pressure, a suspected water main break, or a sewage backup.

Now is also a good time to [make sure your contact information is up to date](#) so you won't miss an important call from us — we call customers during water emergencies and outages to keep them informed.

For non-emergency issues (such as billing or general questions), you can call Customer Service at 412-255-2423 (press 5) during normal business hours, Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., or simply fill out our [Report an Issue](#) webform online. ♦

PGH<sub>2</sub>O

WATER WISE

#### Protect Your Pipes!

Water expands when it freezes, meaning cold winter temperatures can cause water pipes to freeze... or even break. **Follow these steps to protect your pipes:**

- Ensure pipes aren't frozen by opening and turning on taps. Allow water to drip slightly from your faucets if your pipes tend to freeze.
- Insulate pipes, faucets, and water meters in cold areas of your home. Pipes in the attic or an unheated garage can be wrapped before temperatures drop.
- Seal off access doors, air vents, and cracks. Air that enters a home through *any* opening can quickly freeze exposed water pipes.
- Before temperatures drop, remove, drain, and store outside garden hoses. Close the internal valves that control water supply, then open the outside spigot to allow any remaining water to drain.
- If leaving your home for an extended period, consider closing your water shut-off valve and draining the system by opening all faucets and flushing the toilets. To shut off individual fixtures, check for valves under sinks and behind toilets. You can call us at 412-255-2423 to shut off water service at the curb to avoid a minimum monthly charge.

Learn more at [pgh2o.com/protecting-your-pipes](http://pgh2o.com/protecting-your-pipes).



## Customer Assistance Programs

Our Customer Assistance Programs are designed to provide financial relief for income-qualified residential customers who are having difficulty paying their PGH2O bill. These programs are managed by our **PGH2O Cares team**, a group of education and outreach professionals dedicated to working directly with our most vulnerable customers to bolster enrollment in our Customer Assistance Programs and identify ways to reduce water usage.



For more information about our programs, including the **Winter Shut Off Moratorium, Bill Discount, Flexible Payment Plans, Hardship Grant, and Lead Line Reimbursements**, please visit our [Customer Assistance Program](#) page or contact the PGH2O Cares team at 412-255-2457 or [cares@pgh2o.com](mailto:cares@pgh2o.com).

## Additional Assistance Programs

Additional assistance programs are offered separately from PWSA's Customer Assistance Programs.

The **Pennsylvania Housing Assistance Fund (PAHAF)** provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners to help cover water and wastewater charges. Please visit their [website](#) or call 888-987-2423 for more information and to apply.

The **Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN) Clean Water Assistance Fund** is available to eligible residential customers. It is administered by Dollar Energy Fund. To learn more and apply for assistance, visit the [Clean Water Assistance Fund](#) page.

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

If you can, consider donating to our [Hardship Grant Program \(www.pgh2o.com/give\)](#).

## Enroll in eBilling

Convenient and easy to use, our [online billing and payment portal \(www.pgh2o.com/ebilling\)](#) ensures timely delivery of bills and payments.

## Track Water Use

Visit our [Customer Usage Portal](#) to track water use in real time and receive alerts when there's a spike in water use.

## Do We Have Your Number?

**Did you know that we call customers during water emergencies and outages?**

It is important to verify that we have the best number to reach you. You can even add multiple numbers for your account, so your entire household is informed about our work.

### TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO:

**Call PWSA Customer Service:**  
412.255.2423 (Press 5)

**Visit our [Update Contact Information portal](#).**

## Stay in the know with PGH2O!

Join our email list to make sure you're getting the latest news and updates. Signing up is simple on our [News & Events](#) page.

[linkedin.com/company/pgh2o](https://www.linkedin.com/company/pgh2o) [facebook.com/pgh2o](https://www.facebook.com/pgh2o)

[@pgh2o](https://twitter.com/pgh2o)

[nextdoor.com](https://www.nextdoor.com)

Penn Liberty Plaza 1  
1200 Penn Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

**Customer Service**  
T 412.255.2423 (Press 5)  
[info@pgh2o.com](mailto:info@pgh2o.com)

**Emergency Dispatch**  
T 412.255.2423 (Press 1)  
Available 24/7

## Board of Directors

**Chair**  
Alex Sciulli

**Vice Chairperson**  
Erika Strassburger

**Secretary/Treasurer**  
BJ Leber

**Assistant Secretary/  
Treasurer**  
Michael Domach

**Members**  
Peg McCormick Barron

Rosamaria Cristello

Audrey Murrell

## Currents Contributors

Will Pickering  
*Chief Executive Officer*

Rebecca Zito  
*Senior Manager of  
Public Affairs*

Julie Ascioffa  
*Industry Relations Manager*

Rachel Rampa  
*Senior Public Affairs  
Coordinator*

Ross Marcinizyn  
*Internal Communications  
Specialist*

Mora McLaughlin  
*Construction Communications  
Project Manager*

Jordan Treaster  
*Development Coordinator*

Elaine Hinrichs  
*Education and Outreach  
Associate*

Hali Hetz  
*Public Affairs Associate*

Nick Letzkus  
*Public Affairs Associate*