

# Water Main Break in Downtown New York City

by ReadWorks



On August 10, 2006, a 140-foot-long water main at the intersection of West Broadway and Duane Street in New York City finally had its fill, bursting open for the first time since it was built in 1870. The break caused flooding in 15 residential and office buildings, and some of them were immediately evacuated, meaning that everyone had to leave.

Part of bigger water supply systems, water mains are underground pipes that help bring water into peoples' homes, offices, restaurants, and anywhere there is a sink.

Temperature change causes most water main breaks-even a ten-degree change can make water mains more susceptible to breaking. When temperatures fall below freezing or when the temperature becomes very hot, the ground around water mains shifts. This puts stress on water mains, and it might lead to water mains breaking.

When a water main breaks, it can shut off the water supply people use in their houses and businesses.

Many people were stuck standing on the sidewalk in the very early hours of the morning,

while others who lived in the neighborhood didn't even know about the incident until they saw it on the news.

"I just had to walk an extra block out of the way today. They got it fixed really quickly," said Annouchka Engel, who lives on Murray Street and West Broadway. "This morning there was water everywhere, and now it's almost all cleared up."

Local businesses, however, were instantly faced with devastating, unavoidable damages.

"The majority of our stock is damaged, as well as a lot of our electronic equipment, but the city is going to compensate us," said Dajuah Morgan, Assistant Manager of the American Apparel store at 140 West Broadway. Once the basement had filled with water, as much as \$50,000 worth of merchandise was badly damaged, but she predicted the store would reopen again early that evening.

The telecommunication building at 60 Hudson Street, a longtime concern among residents because of its diesel fuel storage, experienced several feet of flooding in the basement.

"It happens in every city," said Michael Saucier, spokesperson for the Department of Environmental Protection, noting that the department had spent \$20-30 million each year replacing old water mains before they break. As he watched dozens of Con-Ed workers milling about West Broadway, Saucier astutely resolved, "You can't get to them all, though."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is a water main?

- A. an intersection
- B. an underground pipe
- C. a building
- D. a local leader

2. The effects of a water main break range from small inconveniences for nearby residents to devastating property damages for businesses. What is the cause of most water main breaks?

- A. vandalism and crime
- B. temperature changes
- C. shrinking city budgets
- D. flooded basements

3. Read the following sentences: "The majority of our stock is damaged, as well as a lot of our electronic equipment, but the city is going to compensate us," said Dajuah Morgan, Assistant Manager of the American Apparel store at 140 West Broadway. Once the basement had filled with water, as much as \$50,000 worth of merchandise was badly damaged."

Based on the evidence above, what conclusion can be made?

- A. Retail stores look forward to water main breaks, as it's a good way for them to make extra money.
- B. West Broadway businesses are especially vulnerable to water main breaks.
- C. Local businesses can be faced with serious damages due to broken water mains.
- D. This author quoted Dajuah Morgan because she is an expert on water main breaks.

4. Read the following sentences: "It happens in every city,' said Michael Saucier, spokesperson for the Department of Environmental Protection, noting that the department had spent \$20-30 million each year replacing old water mains before they break. As he watched dozens of Con-Ed workers milling about West Broadway, Saucier astutely resolved, 'You can't get to them all, though.'"

Based on the evidence above, what conclusion can be made?

- A. Saucier thinks that New York City has bigger water main problems than other cities.
- B. Saucier thinks that New York City is not spending enough to fix the problem.
- C. Saucier thinks that even though his department works hard, water main breaks are unavoidable.
- D. Saucier thinks that even though water mains break, it's not important to replace all of them.

5. What is this article mainly about?

- A. how New York City's water mains work
- B. the causes and effects of water main breaks
- C. the story of one business owner affected by a break
- D. the solutions to New York City's water main problems

6. Read the following sentences: "When temperatures fall below freezing or when the temperature becomes very hot, the ground around water mains shifts. This puts **stress** on water mains, and it might lead to water mains breaking."

As used in the text, what does the word **stress**" most nearly mean?

- A. emphasis
- B. physical pressure
- C. emotional pressure
- D. importance

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Water main breaks can harm people, homes and businesses; \_\_\_\_\_, New York City's Department of Environmental Protection spent \$20-30 million each year replacing old water mains before they break.

- A. first
- B. then
- C. last
- D. thus

8. As discussed in the story, what was one specific consequence of the 2006 water main break at the intersection of West Broadway and Duane Street in New York City?

9. How does the Department of Environmental Protection try to prevent water breaks from happening?

10. Read the following sentences: "It happens in every city," said Michael Saucier, spokesperson for the Department of Environmental Protection, noting that the department had spent \$20-30 million each year replacing old water mains before they break. As he watched dozens of Con-Ed workers milling about West Broadway, Saucier astutely resolved, "You can't get to them all, though."

Based on the evidence above, how does Saucier—who is responsible for keeping New York City protected from water main breaks—most likely feel about the water main break discussed in this story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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8. As discussed in the story, what was one specific consequence of the 2006 water main break at the intersection of West Broadway and Duane Street in New York City?

Answers may vary. Students should note one of the following facts from the text:

It caused flooding in 15 residential and office buildings. It caused people to have to evacuate buildings. It caused as much as \$50,000 worth of merchandise to be badly damaged. The telecommunication building at 60 Hudson Street experienced several feet of flooding in the basement.

9. How does the Department of Environmental Protection try to prevent water breaks from happening?

The Department of Environmental Protection spends \$20-30 million each year replacing old water mains before they break.



**10.** Read the following sentences: "It happens in every city," said Michael Saucier, spokesperson for the Department of Environmental Protection, noting that the department had spent \$20-30 million each year replacing old water mains before they break. As he watched dozens of Con-Ed workers milling about West Broadway, Saucier astutely resolved, "You can't get to them all, though."

Based on the evidence above, how does Saucier—who is responsible for keeping New York City protected from water main breaks—most likely feel about the water main break discussed in this story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Answers may vary; answers should be prepared to use evidence from the passage to draw their own conclusions about his feelings. Students may note that because he says "It happens in every city," he knows that this is a common problem, and may not feel too embarrassed. Or because he does tell the author that the city is spending money to combat the problem, he may in fact feel defensive. Students may also explain that since he says "You can't get to them all," he may simply feel resigned to the problem.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is a meaning of the word **flood**?

- A. fate or destiny
- B. metal shackles
- C. a great supply

2. What is another meaning of the word **flood**?

- A. the act of eating dinner
- B. the amount per unit size
- C. an unusual flow of water

**Please use each answer choice only once. Choose the one word that best completes the sentence.**

3. That was the year the mighty Mississippi River slowly \_\_\_\_\_ nine states in the Midwest.

- A. flood
- B. floods
- C. flooded
- D. flooding

4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a big, wet disaster.

- A. flood
- B. floods
- C. flooded
- D. flooding

5. Rivers and lakes overflow, and \_\_\_\_\_ occurs.

- A. flood
- B. floods
- C. flooded
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6. One of the worst \_\_\_\_\_ in U.S. history began in 1993.

- A. flood
- B. floods
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7. Please write your own sentence using the word **flood**.

8. What would you like to remember about the meaning of the word **flood** so that you can use it when you write or speak?

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1. What is a meaning of the word **damage**?

- A. any harm or injury resulting from a violation of a legal right
- B. a change of position that does not entail a change of location
- C. the place where something begins, where it springs into being

2. What is another meaning of the word **damage**?

- A. a point or extent in space
- B. the general state of things
- C. loss of military equipment

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3. The iceberg \_\_\_\_\_ Titlnic's right side.

- A. undamaged
- B. damage
- C. damaging
- D. damaged
- E. damages

4. But the fire \_\_\_\_\_ her feathers.

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5. Large groups of aphids can \_\_\_\_\_ a plant.

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6. The problem with using these things is that burning them can be harmful and \_\_\_\_\_ to the Earth.

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7. The doors are open, and it looks \_\_\_\_\_.

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- A. the official notes kept during a meeting
- B. an amount of something available for use
- C. a community of people smaller than a town

2. What is another meaning of the word **supply**?

- A. mental focus
- B. goods on hand
- C. verbal abuse

**Please use each answer choice only once. Choose the one word that best completes the sentence.**

3. Clara and her small crew got into her \_\_\_\_\_ wagon and rode toward the fighting.

- A. suppliers
- B. supplied
- C. supplier
- D. resupply
- E. supply
- F. supplies

4. The quantity that consumers wish to purchase at the ceiling price is greater than the quantity \_\_\_\_\_ are willing to supply at this price.

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5. The sky \_\_\_\_\_ all the food they could possibly want.

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6. Once, when my son's vessel put in to base for \_\_\_\_\_, he telephoned me.

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7. Asia is the top \_\_\_\_\_ of rice around the world.

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