



MACCCH

MID-ATLANTIC CENTER
for CHILDREN'S HEALTH
and the ENVIRONMENT

On January 19, D.C. Water officials discovered that a portion of the Potomac Interceptor, a large, 60-year-old pipeline, near the Capital Beltway in Maryland had collapsed, spilling approximately 40 million gallons of untreated sewage a day into the Potomac River. From January 19-28, 2026, about 243 million gallons of sewage spilled into the river from the pipeline failure.

D.C. Water has reported that drinking water was not affected as the pipeline failure occurred downstream from the drinking water facility and the drinking water facility further down river was closed when the pipeline failure was discovered.

The current safety recommendation is to keep children and pets away from the Potomac River area. At this time avoid swimming, boating or fishing in the Potomac River area. If they do go to the area, be sure to wash hands, and remove shoes and leave them outside before entering the home. Wash shoes and any soiled clothing well before wearing again. Wash pet's paws and wash your hands well after cleaning your pet.

Although D.C. Water has assured the public that **drinking water has not been contaminated**, residents may be concerned about drinking water quality. This can be especially concerning for families with children or pregnant women.

If family members have unexplained gastrointestinal problems such as diarrhea or vomiting contact your health care provider. Observe open areas of the skin for infection or slowed healing and report skin issues to your health care provider.

Additionally, if you get your drinking water from the Potomac River you can **check the current condition of your local water quality at:**

Washington D.C: Drinking Water Division at 202-612-3440

About Drinking Water Quality: <https://www.dewater.com/resources/waterquality/about-drinking-water-quality>

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Northern Regional Office: (703) 583-3800

Water Quality: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/water-quality>

For Additional Information please contact the **Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and the Environment:**

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