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Hydrants Are for Fires, Not Fun

PHILADELPHIA – Fire hydrants are essential in fighting fires and are only to be used in case of an emergency. During the hot summer months, it is important to remember the dangers of illegally opening fire hydrants for recreational use.

An open hydrant wastes 1,000 gallons of water per minute- as much in an hour as one household uses in a year. Each summer, hydrant abuse wastes one billion gallons of treated drinking water, which costs Philadelphians more than one million dollars annually.

This abuse also creates a fire hazard. The water pressure necessary for fighting fires decreases when large amounts of water are lost. Also, opening hydrants improperly can damage them, making them unusable for fire protection.

Hydrant abuse interrupts normal water supply to homes and businesses. Contaminated water can be pulled into drinking water through cross connections because of hydrants that are illegally opened. Open hydrants may cause flooding in basements, clogged inlets, traffic congestion, and safety hazards for children playing in the street.

To avoid these problems, seek safer ways of staying out of the heat. Instead of opening a fire hydrant, stay cool by swimming in one of the recreation department's 79 indoor and outdoor pools. Go to a movie theater or mall where there is air conditioning. Participate in outdoor activities that include water, such as canoeing or fishing. By using alternative ways of cooling off, fire hydrants will be protected so they can be used in an emergency when they are needed most.

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