

The Hidden Infrastructure Shaping Your Life

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We have all experienced the frustration of bone-rattling potholes or traffic back-ups from emergency road repairs on a hot summer day. Now keep those potholes and traffic jams in mind, but picture a separate, hidden infrastructure system that is larger and, in some cases, a hundred years older than those roads and bridges. You can't see it, but it ensures we are able to go about our daily routines without a second thought. It keeps our food growing, our manufacturing plants humming, and the lights on in our homes and offices.

These are our water and wastewater systems – underground, out of sight and out of mind. They work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, to bring clean, safe water to us and take it away to be treated before it is safely released back into the environment. Unlike the potholed roads you see on your daily commute, these systems – many of which were built for the America of a century ago, not modern metropolises and sprawling supply chains – don't show their age as easily. But a broken water system is absolutely devastating.

What happens when these systems fail to keep up with our needs? Imagine a day without water. You would not be able to give your dog a bowl of water or make your coffee. Forget about brushing your teeth, flushing the toilet or taking a shower. And that is just residential use. Commercial enterprises, from breweries to hospitals, factories to power plants, carwashes to aquariums, need water, too.

And while water falls from the sky and flows through our rivers, it is far from free. Processing, treating, and bringing it to and from your house costs millions of dollars each year. Here in Hampton Roads, we are constantly reminded of our need for environmental stewardship with our proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and other natural treasures. Water and wastewater systems need ongoing maintenance to update infrastructure that has been in place for decades so that the reliable services we count on can continue uninterrupted.

That is why we at askHRgreen.org are joining with hundreds of groups across the country to “Imagine a Day Without Water”. We invite Hampton Roads to join the conversation about the importance of investing in this critical infrastructure to ensure public health, safety, and economic vitality throughout our region.