

Custodian Caps on Chicago Hydrants—Spring 2024 Chicago Grower's Guide

To ensure sustainable access to water, growers often seek access to municipal water via hydrant. For hydrant use, a [Hydrant Use Permit \(HUP\)](#) is required. In many cases, custodian caps (a magnetic lock applied to the top of a hydrant) have been placed on hydrants to prevent use whether or not the current person or organization seeking access caused the placement of the custodian cap in the first place. Similarly, a collar, a metal band placed around the top of the hydrant to prevent turning with a key, functions the same as a cap. For more information regarding hydrant access broadly, please refer to the [Chicago Growers Guide—Updated Hydrant Permit Policy](#).



To request custodian cap removal, growers must meet the following requirements:

- There cannot have been previous misuse of the hydrant. Misuse is not explicitly or publicly defined.
- The alder of the ward where the hydrant is located must pen or email a letter of support on official letterhead to the Department of Water Management.
- The applicant must be prepared to meet the other hydrant permit requirements which include permission to operate on the

land from the land owner, up to date payment of property taxes, the ability to pay costs associated with hydrant permit (namely, the flat seasonal rate for usage and insurance).

If you or others are seeking hydrant access, please check the right of entry status, and status property taxes before seeking custodian cap removal. An HUP will not be issued even if a cap is removed if the requirements are not met.

With all requirements met, protocol is as follows:

- DWM will perform a site visit after the initial materials are received.
- DWM Leak Desk will review the hydrant to confirm if there was any history of misuse or complaints for the hydrant.
- The commissioner of the DWM then reviews the removal request, and an invoice is sent to the individual, organization, or business that sought removal. In 2023, removal of the cap was \$950.00 flat.
- Following payment at a [payment center](#), a work order is placed, removal is scheduled, and a third party contractor removes the cap.

In many cases, removal from start to finish took over a calendar year. In some cases, removal took as little time as seven months. Because of this, it is advisable for growers to consider a multi-faceted approach to water access including sharing water, and catchment in the interim.

For support with custodian cap removal, be sure to fill out [this form](#) for tailored support. Please reach out to water@auachicago.org and [schedule a meeting on Calendly](#) if you have questions or encounter issues in the process of obtaining a hydrant permit.