

# Discolored Water

The District's water system is supported by a team of highly trained and licensed operators, engineers, laboratory personnel, District staff, officials and numerous local, state and federal agencies all focused on providing safe public drinking water. The District collects monthly samples from all sources of water (ground water wells, treatment plants, treated water). Representative sample stations located throughout the District are tested daily and monthly to ensure the water meets the Texas State and Federal Drinking water standards.

As is required by these regulations the water system is in compliance and the water is safe to drink. If at any point the water is not in compliance with regulations the public will be immediately notified (See No. 3). However, there are instances when a customer may occasionally notice water from your faucet that is discolored, cloudy, or containing sediment. While not typical of the water we are used to, the following information is provided for our customers to understand this issue. See below.

## **1. What is cloudy water?**

Typically, uncolored cloudy water is usually caused by tiny bubbles in the water similar to gas bubbles in carbonated drinks. Air can sometimes become trapped in suspension in the water either from treatment, pumping, repairs or private home equipment such as pumps or aerators. This is not a public health concern or reason for the water to be non-potable (drinkable). The cloudiness is temporary and clears quickly after water flows out of the tap and the extra air is released. If you notice cloudy water, you can fill a clear container with water from the COLD tap and allow it to sit. If the water begins to clear, likely starting at the bottom of the container, it is likely caused by air in the lines. This can also be accompanied by sputtering from the faucet. This effect is noticeable after plumbing work, draining water heaters or repairs. This should clear as water is generally used and will remove the air.

## **2. What is discolored water, is it safe to drink?**

Discolored water has a noticeable color different than normal. It may be caused by many things but is most typically caused by sediment, mineral deposits or changes to the public water system or a home's private plumbing. Discolored water may not be as aesthetically pleasing as normal, but it is safe to drink and bathe. However, the District does not recommend using discolored water for laundry purposed as it may stain clothes.

## **3. What causes discolored water?**

First there are two separate categories, the public water system and the private resident plumbing system. Each could be the cause for individual changes to the water flowing from your faucet.

Brown, rusty or discolored water that is frequently reoccurring in a home are most often associated with corrosion or sediment in the homes pipes, fixtures or hot water heater. This can also be seen on seldom used faucets or fixtures. High demand or prolonged usage can also stir up sediment in the home's lines. You can check if there is a difference in the homes COLD water compared to the HOT water when used briefly. If it is only occurring on the hot water, you might want to flush/drain the hot water tank which may help by clearing out the sediment in the bottom of the tank. If both or only the cold water, customers can try running the cold water for a few minutes to see if it clears or is still discolored. If the water does

not clear, let the system sit for a little while, running a significant amount continuously can actually stir up more sediment in the internal plumbing in your home. If the water remains discolored after waiting, please contact the District office as it might be a system issue.

If you experience a sudden discoloration of water, it is also possible that some activity has disturbed the direction or rate of flow in the District water main that your home is connected to. Discolored water typically comes from internal pipe sediment or precipitation of iron or manganese in groundwater. This does not mean the water is unsafe but only aesthetically different. Try running your cold water for a few minutes, if the water does not clear, let the system sit for 1 to 2 hours, running a significant amount continuously can actually stir up more sediment. After waiting run cold water for a few minutes in your bathtub or shower. If the water remains discolored after waiting 1 to 2 hours, please contact the District office.

The District does not recommend running the hot water for long periods of time if the cold water is still discolored. This will help to minimize filling the hot water tank with turbid water. If you are washing clothes at the time, it is better to stop the cycle while it is full and wait until the discolored water has settled.

### **3. How would I know if the water is unsafe to drink?**

The District is required by state and federal regulations to notify customers as a precautionary measure in case of an event that has or could have possibly introduced containments into the water system. These events could be large water main breaks, system wide pressure loss, natural disaster, equipment or operational issues or results of routine laboratory testing of water in the system. While these events are extremely rare, they are taken very seriously by the District. Such an event would require a boil water notice which a required public statement advising customers to boil their tap water prior to using it for potable (drinking) purposes. Once a boil water notice is issued, the District must inform customers that the water in the affected areas of the public water system should be boiled prior to use for drinking water or human consumption purposes. During a boil water notice, the District is in constant contact with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality the State's water regulator. A boil water notice might be issued even if no containments are actually detected but for precautionary reasons. A boil water notice cannot be rescinded until repairs have been completed, mains have been flushed, disinfection residual levels are acceptable and required water lab samples have been collected and tested. For this reason, a boil water notice normally lasts between 24 to 48 hours due to the time needed to correct the issue, flush the lines and collect and test water samples. The water samples alone require a minimum 18 hours for completion. This process can take up to 3-4 days, and the public will be notified when the boil water notice is lifted. Residents are encouraged to sign up for the District's Immediate Response Information System (IRIS) which is an active contact system that District utilizes to inform our customers of such an event in a timely manner.