

Troubleshooting Water Discoloration or Odor's

Periodically, customers may face issues with their water. Some may see discolored water or smell of an unpleasant odor. These common issues are usually fairly harmless from a health perspective. The City receives its water from two water sources that are both approved water sources that meet or exceed State and Federal drinking water standards: (1) Metropolitan Water District (MWD) surface water; and (2) City groundwater wells. However, each source of water supply has different chemistry that may have a reaction within the City's water mains and residential pipes that can result in changes to water clarity, including cloudiness, discoloration, or odor's. Below are some simple tips that may help.



1) Discoloration Issue Caused By Pipes

Water discoloration is almost universally the result of rust – iron oxide from iron pipes. Old iron pipes are very common in South Pasadena and will rust over time. The variation in color depends on the oxidation of the rust. Rust in the water will not cause health issues. The rusty water can come from either the City's water main or private property plumbing. The key to identifying the source of the discolored water is to determine if the City's water main or property owner's plumbing contributing to the discoloration:

Step 1: Determine if the discoloration is coming from only one faucet or all the faucets in the home. If it is only one faucet, the issue is within the property owner's plumbing.

Step 2: If the discoloration is occurring in water from all faucets, check the "front hose bib" outside the home. Private Service laterals connect from the City's water main to private property. The outside faucet nearest the meter should be the front hose bib. If the water from the front hose bib is clear, the problem is within the property owner's interior plumbing. The owner of the home or landlord will be responsible flushing the pipes (*see "How to Flush your Pipes" below*).

Step 3: If the outside faucet nearest the meter water is discolored, it is from one of the City's water mains. Flush the pipes by running the front hose bib (or kitchen/bathroom faucet if you live in an apartment) for 10-15 minutes. If this does not resolve the problem, please contact the City's Water Division (*see the Contact Information below*).

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2) Unpleasant Odors

Homeowners sometimes experience unpleasant odors in their household water. In many cases, the exact cause of the odor is difficult to determine by water testing; however, this guide provides a few general recommendations for treating some common causes of household water odors:

Step 1: Fill a cup (preferably not made of plastic) from the faucet with the worst smell or taste. Take it outside the house or apartment, away from the sink. Smell or taste the water.

Step 2: If possible, collect some water from outside the house or apartment and bring it inside. Smell the water by the faucet with the worst smell or taste.

- a) If the smell is not present outside and only by the faucet, the odor is coming from the drain. Pour some chlorine bleach, vinegar, lemon juice, or lime juice into the drain, let it sit for 20 or 30 minutes and then turn on the faucet for five minutes. Test for odors.
- b) If you only experience the smell when using the hot tap, it may be a chemical reaction occurring inside the hot water heater, and not a problem with the water supply.
- c) If there is a foul odor or taste in both cases, contact the City's Water Division (*see the Contact Information below*).

How to Flush your Pipes

Improving water quality is as simple as flushing your water pipes to remove the accumulation of organic material. This procedure is outlined in the following steps.

Step 1: Remove the screens (called aerators) from the ends of the indoor faucets and run all of the faucets wide-open and simultaneously for 3 to 5 minutes.

Step 2: Flush the toilets two or three times each while the faucets are running. Running all the water faucets and toilets simultaneously generates a large flow of water through the pipes and will generally dislodge any build-up of organic material that is causing the taste and odor problem. Removing the aerators before flushing the plumbing will prevent anything dislodged by flushing from accumulating on the screens.

Step 3: After 3 to 5 minutes of flushing, turn off the water faucets, clean the aerators, and reinstall the aerators on the ends of the faucets

Contacting the South Pasadena Water Division

The South Pasadena's Water Division can be contacted at 626-403-7240 during working hours (M-T: 7:30 am to 5:00 pm and F: 7:30 am – 4:00 pm) or Police Dispatch at 626-403-7297 after hours.