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Discolored Water – The Cause and Cure

There may be times when you experience discolored water coming from your tap. When it is coming from the water distribution system, this discoloration is a result of sediment in the distribution pipes becoming agitated. This is unavoidable. Ground water naturally contains minerals, i.e., iron and manganese, and Grafton has high levels of these minerals. The chlorine, used to treat the water, causes these minerals to coagulate turning it into fine particles that normally fall to the bottom of the pipe. When agitated, the fine particles float to the top and travel with the water causing it to be discolored. The Grafton Water District treats the water using the Department of Environment (DEP) guidelines to ensure it is safe to drink.

Agitation can occur from several events, but not always causing discolored water.

- Using a hydrant. We use hydrants to fight fires and to flush out the sediment from the distribution system. This will cause discolored water. There are other hydrant uses that can avoid discolored water such as street sweeping, filling up a water truck, or power washing a development. If done properly, discolored water can be avoided. However, there are times when individuals use hydrants without our permission causing discolored water. This usually occurs during the summertime. If you see someone using a hydrant illegally, please call us immediately.
- During a main break, the system becomes agitated causing discolored water.
- During the implementation of a new main extension which will be used in a new housing development.
- Flushing out a fire suppression system can cause discolored water if the flow is too high.
- If your water main is not on a loop and ends close to your home (aka, a dead end), you may experience discolored water long after an event occurs. This is because the discolored water becomes trapped in the dead end. If you experience this, call the water district to see what can be done to resolve it.

The Trinity Avenue well site produces discolored water.

This well source has extremely high iron and manganese that produces substantial amounts of sediment and discolored water. We do not use this well site unless it is necessary, and we run it only at night when there is minimal consumption. We are in the beginning stages of adding a treatment plant to remove the iron and manganese, enabling us to use it more often.

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Discolored water in your building may not be from the distribution system.

Hot water heaters can produce discolored water. This applies to both tanked and tankless. If you see discolored water, check to see if it is only occurring with the hot water. Sediment builds up in a hot water tank and can produce discolored water.

Avoiding discolored water in your building.

When we know there is a possibility of discolored water, we let you know via our website and Facebook. However, most of the time, we cannot predict when the system will become agitated and cause discolored water. The best way to prevent discolored water in your home is to install a whole house sediment filter.

What to do when you see discolored water.

- ✓ First, check to see if it is only hot water. If it is only hot water, then you will need to flush out your hot water heater to prevent a reoccurrence. You should flush out your hot heater once a year.
- ✓ If it is cold water, then the discolored water is coming from the distribution system.
 - Avoid using hot water when this occurs to prevent your tank from filling up with discolored water.
 - Check our website or Facebook to see if we have provided you with information about this.
 - If we know about it, wait about ½ hour after the event and run your cold water until it clears. This usually takes about 15 minutes.
- ✓ A filter on your tap water can prevent the sediment from getting through. You should change filters regularly.
- ✓ Avoid laundering. The discoloration may also taint your laundry. Run the clothes through the washing machine again (after the discoloration clears) to remove the stains. **DO NOT USE BLEACH!** Bleach interacts with iron minerals and can make it worse. LCR or Iron out can remove iron stains.
- ✓ It is safe to bathe in, but if the discoloration bothers you, delay bathing until the water clears.
- ✓ The water is safe to drink, but I am sure you will find this difficult. Let the water stand and the sediment will drop to the bottom of the container which will cause the water to clear. You can also delay drinking it until the water clears.