

# DISCOLORED WATER FAQs

Water distribution systems across the U.S. experience temporary issues of discolored water. Water main breaks, firefighting activities, vehicles hitting fire hydrants, unusually high demand, and changes in the operations of a distribution system can increase the speed or change the direction of water traveling through water mains, resulting in temporarily discolored water.

## **Why is my water discolored?**

Cloudy water is caused by tiny air bubbles in the water like the gas bubbles in carbonated soft drinks. After a while, the bubbles rise to the top and are gone. This type of cloudiness occurs more often in the winter when the drinking water is cold. Potential Solution: Let the water run for a short period of time and check periodically for water clarity.

Rusty brown water may be caused when the water tank is rusting or water pipes in the street leading to your home are rusting. If you are having trouble and your neighbors are not, then your own pipes and water heater are possibly rusting. A licensed plumber may need to correct this problem.

Naturally occurring minerals in the water are the usual causes of temporarily discolored water. These minerals are heavier than water and settle to the bottom of water mains. When the flow of water through the water pipes increases or changes direction, the minerals are stirred up and discolor the water that flows out of your faucets when you turn them on.

## **What Should I Do if My Water Is Temporarily Discolored?**

If the water is lightly discolored (the color of a brown paper bag or lighter), try running a cold-water faucet for five to 10 minutes to clear out internal plumbing. Flush your toilets two or three times. If the initial cold-water flush does not clear up the problem, wait about an hour and repeat flushing. This amount of water use should not affect your water bill.

You can also remove the aerator on the faucet (located directly under the faucet where the water comes out) with your fingers or pliers by twisting it to the left. Clean the small screen in the aerator and flush the faucet out with cold water. Avoid running hot water if the cold water is discolored. This will minimize filling the hot water tank with the discolored water.

This will help you determine if the discolored water is coming from the distribution system or your home's plumbing system. If the above mentioned does not correct the problem, please contact our office.

## **Is the discolored water that I am experiencing in my home safe to drink?**

Even though discolored water is not harmful; we realize it is not aesthetically pleasing either. Whether or not you feel comfortable drinking the water is a personal decision and an understandable one. If at any time the water is deemed unsafe to drink, you will be notified by Cumberland County Public Utilities with guidance from the State of North Carolina's Division of Environmental Quality immediately through several communications channels.

Although harmless, discolored water may leave stains when washing clothes. If you are experiencing discolored water, you may want to postpone doing laundry for a short time until your water becomes clear.

As with all your personal and family's home and health decisions, common sense is always the best approach. Even though discolored water is harmless, if you do not feel comfortable using it during short periods of discoloration, we certainly understand. As always, you are the best judge of what is best for you and your family.