

INFORMATION ABOUT DISCOLORED WATER

Occasionally Erie Water receives consumer questions or complaints regarding the appearance of drinking water, specifically manganese-tinted discolored water. There are two major sources that can cause water to be discolored – flow changes in the water mains caused by a main leak or an open fire hydrant, and/or the water pipes in your property, often from a failing hot water heater.

Why is the water discolored in my property?

Manganese-tinted discolored water may occur because of sediment in the pipes which has built up on the inside walls of older water mains. This sediment can be disturbed and subsequently suspended in the water due to an increase or change in water flow which may be caused by water main breaks, routine maintenance, flow direction changes or the use and flushing of a nearby fire hydrant. Failing hot water heaters in properties are also a source of discolored water. If the discoloration comes only when you run the hot water in your property, check the condition of your hot water heater. Discolored water from the cold water faucet usually signals an issue with the water mains in the street or the property's internal plumbing. Discolored water can be a chronic problem in areas where there are older cast iron mains. Replacement, rehabilitation and cleaning of these older mains will provide relief --however such solutions are expensive and take time.

Is discolored water dangerous?

No. Discolored water is not a health threat even though it is not very appealing to drink. Even very low levels of Manganese can color the water.

What should I do if I have discolored water?

Erie Water recommends that you flush your water until you get clear water from the main. If it is still discolored after several minutes of flushing, you may need to wait a couple of hours until the sediment settles, and the water in the main clears. Then try flushing again. Erie Water may need to flush the main. When the water is discolored, it is recommended to not do laundry or run the hot water (to prevent sediment getting into your hot water tank). If it is necessary to do laundry, use stain remover or a regular detergent with the wash. Use of chlorine bleach is not recommended, as this could make the situation worse. Filtering or treating the water may remedy chronic or persistent manganese-tinted water problems, however Erie Water does not endorse specific filtering devices. If you decide to use a filtration or treatment device in your home we recommend use of a National Science Foundation (NSF) listed device. In addition, we strongly recommend that the device be maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. Failure to maintain this type of equipment properly may make treatment ineffective and may create the potential for contamination.