

# Troubleshooting Common Water Complaints

## WATER SMELLING LIKE SULFUR OR ROTTEN EGGS?



Sulfur smells come from the iron in the water. Iron is a natural thing to find in water that comes from wells. As the iron collects in pipes, it will give off a sulfur smell. Iron especially builds up in hot water heaters and in seldom-used lines.

Briefly running these lines frequently will prevent the sulfur smells that come from the iron build up. Your water heater should be cleaned and drained at least once a year. Over time, water heaters collect particles of iron sediment from the water.

Overtime, as the sediment settles to the bottom of your water heater it gives off smells that comes out when you turn on your hot water faucets or use hot water in your laundry

wash. To fix this...

- 1) Turn off the water supply to the water heater.
- 2) If it is a gas water heater, turn off the gas to the heater. If it is an electric heater, turn off the breaker or unscrew the fuse that works the water heater.
- 3) Open the spigot on the bottom of the water heater and drain the heater completely. To do this you may want to connect a hose to the spigot and run it to your sump pump, floor drain or into a bucket. You'll want a bucket that you can dump out during this process.
- 4) Drain the water heater.
- 5) Once it has drained, turn the water supply back on and let it wash the particles (trash) out of your water heater. Let it run this way for about 15 minutes or until no more particles (trash) is being washed out the spigot.
- 6) If it doesn't drain, that is a real problem. You probably need a new water heater. Call a plumber.

## WATER THAT SMELLS OF CHLORINE

There are two reasons for chlorine smells in water lines. One, it is common in seldom used lines. Thus, you may notice more smells with water lines that you don't use very often. Second, it is from the chlorine we add to the water supply.

First, Chlorine and sulfur collect in little used lines and dead-end lines. When these lines are used, you may smell chlorine or sulfur. If this is the case, briefly turn these lines on more frequently.

Secondly, this may be caused by the injection of chlorine in the water main at each well. (We have five wells in and out of the City limits.) Chlorine helps purify the water. When we turn a well on, chlorine is injected into the water. Customers a short distance from the well may smell the burst of the chlorine. Customers further away may not notice this smell as the injection disperses better over distance.



## BROWN / RUSTY WATER?

While brown and rusty looking water is safe, it just isn't appealing, tasty or good for washing clothes. Sometimes, this is a problem caused by the water system (run by the City). Sometimes it may mean a problem in your home system (from the shut-off valve to faucets).

It may mean that we have been working on a water line, flushing hydrants, or that the fire department fought a fire and opened a hydrant. All of these actions can rapidly change the pressure in the line or the direction of the water in the line. This loosens particles of iron that collect on the walls of the water lines. They break loose and flow into the line going into your home.

When a waterline breaks and we work to fix the line we bang on the waterline. This loosens the particles of iron that then flow into your home.

Older pipes in your home will build up with particles too. Banging or working on your pipes will also cause discolored water. Changing temperatures cause pipes to expand or shrink. This process loosens up the particles and you'll get brown / rusty water. If an indoor water line runs by a window or an exterior wall the pipe and the water in it may get really cold, almost freeze, or actually freeze. This causes the water in the pipe to expand. This puts pressure on the pipe. This expansion loosens the particles that have collected on the walls of the pipe. Then, when you turn on the water, you'll get a brown or rusty colored water.

Your water comes from five wells. We turn them on and off at different times. They all push water from the well to the water storage tank. Three of these wells are at least 1 mile from the storage tank. When we turn them on, it changes the direction of the water moving through the line. It also changes the pressure of the water in the line. This action, as you read above, loosens particles that naturally collect on the walls of the pipes. They become suspended in the water and cause the water to appear rusty or brown.