



City of Phoenix
WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Q&A

Tap Water Taste, Odor & Hardness

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Background: The taste, odor and hardness that some customers sense in Phoenix's tap water are aesthetic issues and do not impact the city's high water quality.

1. Why do I sometimes notice taste or odor in Phoenix's water?

Taste or odor variations in Phoenix's tap water supply are often seasonal (stronger near fall of the year) and come from minerals and algae that collect in the canals that transport our surface water along to Phoenix's water treatment plants. The chlorine used in the treatment process to disinfect your water before it reaches your tap also can make our water's taste and odor stronger. The algae is removed during the treatment process, but much like a bouquet of roses that has not been in a room for hours, you still may be able to smell it. Taste and odor are aesthetic issues in Phoenix water. (Disinfecting water with chlorine is one of the most widely used methods to safeguard drinking water.)

2. Does the taste or odor mean my water is unsafe?

Phoenix tap water meets or surpasses all regulatory requirements for health and safety. Over five million tests and measurements are performed each year throughout the treatment and distribution systems and analyzed using state of the art equipment and laboratories. Phoenix also submits hundreds of reports each year to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. Be assured that if water quality is ever an issue in Phoenix, customers will be notified.

3. How can I improve the taste and odor of my water?

To improve taste and odor place a slice of lemon in your water, leave a container of water uncapped for 30-60 minutes and place it in the refrigerator, or use a filter on your faucet or refrigerator. (Be sure to change filters according to manufacturer's instructions.)

4. What is Phoenix doing to help improve the taste of our water?

Phoenix understands that perceptions about taste and odor vary – so Phoenix continues to improve the aesthetics of our water, even though the quality is extremely high, by using carbon during treatment, highly advanced water monitoring and sampling techniques, blending of Central Arizona Project and Salt River Project water, and canal brushing by SRP to diminish taste and odor causing algae.

5. Why is my tap water hard?

The presence of minerals, such as calcium and magnesium, which originate from the soils our source water contacts as it travels to Phoenix's water treatment plants, contribute to hardness.

6. Do I need to use water filters or softeners at home to make my water safe?

Since Phoenix water meets or exceeds federal, state and local water quality standards, water filters are typically not necessary unless advised by your physician or desired as a personal choice. If you choose to use filters or softeners be sure to follow manufacturers' maintenance instructions.

7. Where can I learn more about the quality of Phoenix's tap water?

Detailed information about the quality of Phoenix's water is available online at phoenix.gov/WATER/qualrept.html, where you'll find a copy of our annual Water Quality Report that is mailed each May with the monthly Municipal Services Bill. You also may call the Environmental protection agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline for information about the Safe Drinking Water Act or EPA's other drinking water programs at 800-426-4791.

World Wide Web sites that provide information about drinking water include:

Arizona Department of Health Services – www.azdhs.gov

Maricopa County Environmental Services Department –
www.maricopa.gov/envsvc

U.S. EPA – www.epa.gov/ogwdw

Centers for Disease Control – www.cdc.gov

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality – www.azdeq.gov

Tap Into Quality – www.tapintoquality.com