



City of Phoenix

WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Quality Reliability Value

Cloudy or Discolored Water FAQ

June 2015

Background: Cloudy water is usually caused by microscopic air bubbles trapped in the water. Discoloration may be from aging pipes in your home or business, especially if it occurs upon first use in the morning. Discoloration or sediment may also be seen after a water leak repair or a fire hydrant has been flushed in the area near your home or business.

1. What are the possible reasons my tap water may be cloudy or discolored?

There are several reasons your tap water may be temporarily cloudy or discolored.

It may be caused by microscopic **air bubbles** in the water. This is a natural phenomenon, caused by dissolved air in the water that is released when the faucet is opened. If air is the reason, the water usually clears within a few minutes if allowed to stand.

Discoloration may be from **aging pipes in your home or business**, especially if it occurs upon first use in the morning

Cloudy or discolored water also may be caused by **changes in the flow of the city's water lines**. If water crews have recently been working in your area or fire hydrants have been opened, you may notice cloudy or discolored water. The city's lines are likely to be the cause if such changes occur suddenly. Visible particles are generally an accumulation of iron or minerals that were stirred up. **The water may not be aesthetically pleasing, but it is safe to drink** because disinfectant remains in tap water. If the city's pipes are the cause, the city checks disinfection levels to ensure that the water is safe, and may flush water from area fire hydrants to purge the system of the cloudy or discolored water. It may take several hours to clear the water.

2. How will I know if I should not drink my tap water?

If drinking tap water is not advisable, Phoenix representatives will visit your home or business address. On a large scale, the media will be notified and information will be placed on phoenix.gov. Phoenix's ability to shut-down affected water lines and re-route service to you, along with high-tech treatment at plants, makes those possibilities extremely unlikely.

People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk because cloudiness can interfere with disinfection and provide a medium for microbial growth, as well as indicate the presence of disease-causing organisms. These organisms include bacteria, viruses and parasites that can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea and associated headaches. These individuals should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

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3. Can I use cloudy or discolored water around the house?

It generally can be used for drinking, showering, flushing toilets, cleaning floors, and the like. When the water is discolored, it is recommended to either not wash laundry or to use a rust stain remover or regular detergent but not chlorine bleach as it will react with the iron to form a permanent stain.

For immediate concerns, please call Water Services Customer Services @ 602-262-6251(M - F, 7:30 am to 5 pm); or 602-261-8000 (weekends, holidays and M - F after 5 pm).

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