



City of Phoenix  
WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT



# Tap Water Taste, Odor & Hardness

Page 1 of 2 12/7/12

**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 are often seasonal (stronger near the fall of the year) due to increased algae in the canals that transport surface water to Phoenix's treatment plants. These are harmless, aesthetic aspects that some consumers may notice. Taste, odor and hardness are not regulated under drinking water and health standards. The canal algae are removed during the treatment process, although the scent may remain. The chlorine used in our treatment process and maintained throughout the distribution system to disinfect your water also can affect the taste and odor.

## **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?**

It is important to note that private plumbing lines in your home or business and the use of filtration systems may affect these aesthetics significantly. Proper maintenance of them is crucial, not only for aesthetics, but for your health.

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 vary regarding taste and odor. The city continues to enhance the aesthetics of our tap water, even though the quality is extremely high, by using carbon during treatment (much like that in a refrigerator filter), highly advanced water monitoring and sampling techniques and blending of Central Arizona Project and Salt River Project water. SRP also brushes its canals to help 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 surpasses 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](http://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](http://www.azdhs.gov)

Maricopa County Environmental Services Department –

[www.maricopa.gov/envsvc](http://www.maricopa.gov/envsvc)

U.S. EPA – [www.epa.gov/ogwdw](http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw)

Centers for Disease Control – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality – [www.azdeq.gov](http://www.azdeq.gov)

Tap Into Quality – [www.tapintoquality.com](http://www.tapintoquality.com)