



Frequently Asked Questions – Discolored Water

What can cause discolored water?

- **Iron** is a naturally occurring mineral necessary for human health. Iron occurs naturally in the ground water pumped from the City's wells. There is no health concern from the Iron introduced into the City's water system from the wells. WisDNR and US EPA have set aesthetic standards for iron in drinking water; the City's wells do not exceed these standards. The iron can build up as sediment in the City's water mains and water towers.
- **Aging Plumbing**
Another source of discolored water is plumbing within the home. Many homes have galvanized steel pipes, which corrode over time from the inside as their zinc coating wears thin. This is especially common in the 700+ homes in the City of New Richmond constructed before 1960. Rust can build up and pieces can flake off, resulting in a yellow or orange tint. Signs that the discoloration is potentially coming from your indoor plumbing include: the water is discolored every morning or with first use, the discoloration only affects certain fixtures and not others, the discoloration affects only hot water and cold water runs clear, and the discoloration clears after changing a water filter.
- **Corrosion in Water Heater**
Your water heater can corrode over time, causing flakes of rust to enter your water supply.
- **Changes in Water Pressure**
The water department routinely performs maintenance to clear the water mains of sediment that otherwise accumulates over time. Use of a fire hydrant, a water main break, or construction activity in your neighborhood can cause sudden discoloration. Your water may also appear discolored after periods of low water use in your home. There are businesses in New Richmond that use a significant amount of water intermittently; this higher system demand can increase the velocity at which water travels through the water mains and stir up iron and manganese sediment.
- **Air Entrainment**
Cloudy, foamy, or milky-looking water is caused by tiny air bubbles and the change in pressure when you turn on your faucet. This is most common in winter months, when water temperatures are colder. Entrained air is somewhat similar to how soda fizzes when you first remove the bottle cap. After a few moments, the water should clear from the bottom of the glass to the top.
- **Dirty Filter System**
If you have a home filter system or refrigerator water filter, bacteria and metals can build up in filter cartridges over time and require replacement.

Can customers have confidence in the safety of the drinking water?

Yes! The water department tests the water regularly following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) protocols. Staff collect and test daily samples, and inspect the City's five wells on a daily basis. New Richmond Utilities customers can be confident in the safety of their drinking water. It's also important to point out that occasional water discoloration doesn't necessarily mean that your water is unhealthy. Natural sediments impact color, odor, or taste of water. However, out of an abundance of caution, please contact the Water Department to alert us of any noticeable changes.

How does New Richmond Utilities reduce discolored water?

The water department uses controlled hydrant flushing to remove sediments from our 81 miles of water mains and to ensure adequate water flow is available for fire protection. Hydrant flushing is primarily performed in the spring and fall months. Hydrant flushing causes a flow disruption that discharges discolored water and sediments from the hydrants. While there is not a 100% guaranteed method for preventing discolored water, the City will continue to explore additional methods in reducing the likelihood that it will occur.



What should I do if I have discolored water?

- **Run Your Water**

Flush the cold water faucet in your bathtub for five minutes. After the bathtub faucet runs clear, flush all of the other cold water household faucets in your home. You may need to flush your water heater as well if you notice that the hot water appears discolored.

- **Contact Us**

Please contact us during normal business hours at 715-246-4167 or dpufall@newrichmondwi.gov to discuss your situation. Please be prepared to provide your contact information and address, along with a detailed description of the issue, so that we can track what neighborhoods are reporting issues, and so that we can offer the best customer service possible.

Note: Facebook can be great for keeping in touch with family and friends, but it is also (unfortunately) a frequent source for misinformation and fearmongering – so please contact us to receive credible information and assistance!

- **Water Treatment Services**

Depending on the root cause of the issue, you may need to contact a local plumber and consider installing a water filtration system.