



Water System Maintenance Program FAQs

What is the “Water System Maintenance Program?”

This program is a temporary conversion from chloramine to chlorine disinfection and is a routine maintenance measure designed to reduce the potential for occurrences of coliform or other types of bacteria in the water delivery system.

Why is the maintenance program being conducted?

This is a planned treatment designed to provide additional protection to our customers against bacteria in the water supply. Many Utilities using chloramine disinfection find it helpful to periodically switch to a free chlorine treatment program to help maintain system integrity.

Do the local or regional distribution systems have a bacteria problem?

There are no major indications of significant bacteriological contamination problems, however, there are isolated bacteriological measurements in the local distribution systems that may indicate a potential future problem. The flushing and disinfection program is designed to maintain distribution system water quality and minimize the potential for any future problem. The maintenance program is supported by the Health Department and will include daily testing to monitor water quality and measure the effectiveness of the program.

When will the program be conducted?

The maintenance program is planned for September 18, 2006 through October 27, 2006. If there are any changes in the duration of the program, customers will be notified.

Who will be affected?

The program will include all customers of Pinellas County Utilities as well as customers in the cities of Clearwater, Pinellas Park, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs and part of Oldsmar.

Will customers notice any changes in the water during the program?

Pinellas County Utilities customers may experience a slight difference in taste and/or smell in the water during this temporary change in treatment. These are normal occurrences and carry no negative health effects for the general population. The impact to the customer will be similar to those experienced when a water main is replaced or other routine maintenance is performed on the water distribution system.

Can I drink the water during this maintenance program?

Yes, the water is perfectly safe to drink during this program however customers may notice a slight difference in taste and/or smell.

Do I need to boil the water?

No, the water is perfectly safe to drink during this maintenance program. Boiling the water is not necessary.

Why are we not staying with chlorine?

In 1998, to reduce our dependency on groundwater, Tampa Bay area governments agreed to a process that resulted in delivery of a blend of water from several different sources, i.e., groundwater, surface (river) water and desalinated water. When Tampa Bay Water began distributing this blended water to its customers in 2002, the disinfectant agent was changed from chlorine to chloramine since chlorine can react negatively with the unique chemistry of some components in surface water. As a result, we will be returning to chloramine as our primary disinfectant agent once this maintenance program is concluded. The health concerns associated with chlorine and blended water are related to long-term exposure and not short term maintenance actions.

Will the program effect dialysis patients?

Users of kidney dialysis machines should contact their dialysis care provider for more information about water testing and precautions regarding chlorine removal. Chlorine, like chloramine, is fatal if it enters the bloodstream during the hemodialysis process. As a result, strict water purification standards are already followed by the kidney dialysis industry as established by the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation.

Will the chlorine affect aquatic life?

Those with questions should contact their local pet suppliers. The temporary change to chlorine should not affect those with live fish if a system is already in place to remove chloramine.

What changes can be expected once the program is completed?

Local distribution systems will be flushed to clear the chlorinated water as chloraminated water is reintroduced to the system. During this process, customers may see a temporary variation in color as well as possible sediment in the water. Running water at the tap for one to two minutes should remedy this temporary occurrence.

If I have questions, who should I call for more information?

For more information, please contact Pinellas County Utilities Customer Service at (727) 464-4000.