

Dirty Water Protocol

Sometimes our customers note brownish water coming from their taps, and we hear these reports most often during warmer months when irrigation systems are active.

This type of discoloration is common when there is a sudden change in the flow of water in the pipeline. Water distribution systems across the country experience temporarily discolored water for several reasons, including:

- Water main breaks
- Firefighting activities
- Collisions with fire hydrants
- High demand (often related to irrigation systems)
- Construction activities

What's Making the Water Brown?

Our system relies on well water and it's the naturally occurring minerals that are typically the root cause of temporarily discolored water. As minerals are heavier than water, they often settle at the bottom of water mains. When water flow increases or changes direction in the pipes, the minerals are stirred up and discolor the water.

Is the Water Harmful to Drink?

For most people, discolored water is safe to drink. However, as it may look less than appetizing, we recommend waiting until it clears before drinking it.

People who are immunocompromised may be more vulnerable than the general population to substances in drinking water. These people may seek advice from their health care providers about drinking discolored water.

Can I Do Laundry if My Water Is Discolored?

If you are washing clothes when you notice your water is discolored, it is better to stop the cycle while it is full and wait until clean water is available to finish. If you allow the water to empty from the washing machine and go into the spin cycle, it is more likely to cause permanent staining. Do not use chlorine bleach if you rewash stained laundry; bleach will actually set the stains. Instead, use a product made to remove rust stains like RIT.

Before starting laundry after noticing discolored water, wait until water is running clear at the tap. Then, wash a load of darker clothes first.

What Should I Do if My Water Is Discolored?

If your water is lightly discolored brown, try the following:

- 1.) Run cold water for 5-10 minutes.
- 2.) Flush your toilets 2-3 times.
- 3.) (Optional) Clean the aerator screen (located directly under the faucet where the water comes out). You can remove the aerator on the faucet by twisting it to the left.
- 4.) If you're still seeing discolored water after performing the above, wait about an hour and repeat running cold water and flushing the toilets.

DO NOT RUN HOT WATER until your water is once again clear. Discolored water can get trapped in your hot water heater and it will need to be drained.

If your water remains discolored, please contact the Louisa County Water Authority at 540-967-1122. If you need assistance after normal business hours, please call the Louisa County non-emergency phone number, 540-967-1234. Even after normal hours, we can dispatch someone from our Maintenance Team for pressing issues.