murray river council

Why is my filtered water discoloured?

2022 flooding information

Due to recent flood waters, Council's Filtered Water Networks are being affected by discolouration in the river supply systems. The affects are different right across the area, with some networks experiencing more issues with discoloration than others.

While the filtered water is discoloured, it is not harmful and the filtered water quality is within the requirements of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

Please note that due to the discolouration the following may occur:

- toilet u-bends may look a little murky
- bath water may look dirty
- white sheets and clothes may not stay white when washed.

This is likely to be an ongoing issue for weeks to come.

What causes the discolouration?

The discoloured water that some areas are experiencing is from high levels of Manganese in the river water due to the floods. Manganese can be difficult to treat at it stays soluble in the water until it oxidises once treated with chlorine and pH correction; both of which are vital to ensuring water is safe to drink.

Another challenge is the increased demand for water on warmer days – with people now starting to fill up pools and running evaporative air conditioners, for example. Due to the extra use, the Manganese that has formed on the inside of the pipes gets stripped away, causing pockets of very high coloured and sedimented water (this generally happens in dead-ended mains and/or at our furthest point of the distribution network). To help with this, our teams are flushing the water mains in areas of concern.

What is Manganese?

Manganese (Mn) is an element that is found in air, soil, and water. It is one of the most abundant metals in the Earth's crust and is a component of over 100 minerals. Manganese is an element that occurs naturally in rocks, soils and commonly found in the rivers and streams.

Health effects of Manganese

Manganese is regarded as one of the least toxic metals when ingested by oral route (that is, through eating and drinking). It is actually an essential trace mineral required in our diets for good health and is not harmful when consumed at low concentrations.

Manganese and laundry stains

Quite often manganese is noticed in laundry due to the fact that many washing powders use oxidising agents. When manganese is present in the water these washing powders may cause it to oxidise and in fact set brown/black stains in your laundry.

If you are doing laundry and notice that the water contains particles or has a taint to it, leave the laundry items in the machine or tub; do not spin or hang out to dry as this will set stains that may have formed. Run your taps to try and clear out the discoloured water and then rewash the clothes.

Water quality sampling and testing

Murray River Council's Treatment Plant Operators keep a close eye on water quality. Water is sampled and analysed through all stages of collection, treatment, storage and distribution to our consumers.

On-line devices continually monitor important water quality indicators, with many being programmed to alarm and shut down treatment plants automatically if specific operating limits are breached. Our trained treatment operators also monitor water quality on a daily basis to ensure on-line analysers are working correctly, and so that adjustments can be made to treatment processes as required.

In addition, samples are collected from across the water supply systems on a weekly basis and sent to an external laboratory for independent analysis. Results for regulated parameters are checked by NSW Health every month. This is to ensure we are meeting strict requirements of safe drinking water legislation.

Water is safe to drink!

Water supplied by Murray River Council must meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and the requirements of NSW Health. So, whilst it may not be running clear, it is certainly safe for consumption.