



Town of Lincoln Water Department Discolored Water/Flushing Guide

The Lincoln Water Department (LWD) makes every effort to notify customers in advance of the possibility of discolored water due to planned flushing or construction work. If the discolored water persists after running your cold water lines for thirty (30) minutes, please contact Customer Service at 781-259-2669 during our normal business hours Monday thru Friday 7am to 3pm. After hours, weekends and holidays, please call the Police Dispatch at (781) 259-8113.

Sometimes discolored water appears at your home or business. There can be many reasons, but discolored water usually originates in the water distribution system or private plumbing systems.

Corrosion or rusting of the interior surfaces of metal pipes is a primary source of discoloration and particles that can appear in your water. There are several possible situations that can cause this material to be dislodged. The most probable of these causes are listed below, along with the steps you can take to deal with a temporary problem.

Is it safe to drink or use for washing clothes?

Discolored water may not be aesthetically pleasing, but it is safe to drink. However, LWD does not recommend using discolored water to do laundry. Clothes can become stained. If clothing gets stained, immediately wash the clothes again using a rust remover product (not bleach). This rust remover is available in most home improvement stores or supermarkets

Discolored water and trapped air are common occurrences after a water main break or other water system maintenance work. Discolored water is caused by sediment and mineral deposits in the pipes that can be stirred up when the water is turned off and then back on following work on the LWD water system.

My water looks white or milky in color

As a result of a water main break or hydrant usage, air pockets often form within the water pipes. Natural mineral scale is on the inside of the pipes, and disturbances in the flow of the water from the above-mentioned activities can release air. Change in water temperature can also cause this phenomenon. Flushing the **COLD** water pipes in your home or business usually clears up the discolored water and will allow trapped air to be released.

Determine the source of the discolored water?

- ✓ Flush the toilet. The toilet only uses cold water; if the water in the bowl is clear, then the problem is with the hot water. If the water in the bowl is dirty, then the cold water is affected, and activities outside your home should be considered as the cause. If the hot water is the source, the hot water tank should be flushed according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- ✓ Look for street sweepers or anyone else who may be using a fire hydrant in the area.

- ✓ Water mains in the distribution system can fail due to age, corrosion, high pressure surges, defective materials, or damage by construction work. When a main breaks, the increased velocity of the water can pick up dirt and other materials that normally settle to the bottom of the pipes.
- ✓ High velocity water due to a fire hydrant being broken off by a vehicle or by hydrants being tested or used to fight a fire can pick up sediment and cause temporary discolored water.
- ✓ Dead end water mains have low flow that can result in sediment accumulation. Over time the lack of circulation can result in the appearance of discolored, foul tasting, stale water.
- ✓ If you are not sure of the cause of your discolored water, contact Customer Service. During our normal business hours (Monday thru Friday 7am to 3pm) call 781-259-2669. After hours, or on weekends and holidays, please call the Police Dispatch at (781) 259-8113. They will put you in touch with the on-call Water Department staff.

What can I do to correct the discolored water situation?

- ✓ LWD suggests running all **COLD** water taps for about (10) minutes or until the water runs clear, using the following procedure:
 - Begin with the lowest faucet in your home or business and then open the other faucets, one at a time, moving from your lowest floor to your highest.
 - Once the water runs clear, usually in five minutes or less, turn off your faucets in the same order, lowest to highest.
 - You should also flush your refrigerator's water lines and any other appliance that uses town water.
- ✓ Most dirty water situations will clear within ten (10) minutes to fifteen (15) minutes. If not, turn the water off, wait ten (10) minutes to fifteen (15) minutes, and repeat the flushing again.

After a Water Main Repair or Hydrant Flushing

LWD flushes hydrants to test their proper functioning for fire flows, but also periodically to freshen the water supply particularly where the water pipe acts is a dead end rather than part of a loop.

- ✓ If the LWD is flushing hydrants, customers may experience discoloration in the water, and the smell and/or taste of your water may be different. This could last for a few hours. The discoloration only affects the appearance of the water; it does not affect the taste or water quality.
- ✓ The water may also have a milky appearance. This is due to tiny air bubbles that will dissipate over time and is not harmful.
- ✓ After LWD repairs a water main, you may see a reddish discoloration in the water caused by small amounts of iron compounds flushing out of the system. These iron compounds are not hazardous, and you can clear up the discoloration by running the cold water in all taps as described above.
- ✓ If pressure or volume seems low, check your faucet screens for trapped particles. Particles of iron can sometimes get into your aerators, causing a loss of water flow. If this happens, take off the aerator on all faucets and showerheads and rinse them off.
- ✓ Avoid washing laundry during scheduled flushing times. Wait until the water runs clear at the tap, then wash a load of dark clothes first. Hot water tanks can hold discolored water for some time after the cold water runs clear.
- ✓ You may notice a more pronounced chlorine taste or odor in the water during springtime flushing. This is because free chlorine has a more noticeable chlorine taste and odor. This will dissipate when water is left in an open container in the refrigerator. Letting water sit in a glass for a moment will also take care of air bubbles that are stirred up during flushing and cause the milky appearance.

Will I be notified before my service is interrupted?

You will receive a letter from LDW and or a blue door tag when work is scheduled in your area. However, when we respond to main breaks or other emergencies it's not possible for us to provide advance notice. Please be sure that we have your phone number and or email address so you can receive these messages. Please keep in mind we may not notify customers during late night or early morning hours.