



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 switch periodically to a free chlorine treatment program to help maintain system integrity.

What other benefits does the maintenance program provide?

This method of water quality maintenance is effectively an alternative to flushing millions of gallons of drinking water. As a result of enhanced water quality monitoring and flushing strategies in 2014, flushing volumes were reduced by approximately 60 percent at a cost savings of about \$50,000 per month. Flushing volumes have decreased dramatically since 2012, with the twice-yearly maintenance conversion programs being a major contributing factor.

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 Florida Department of Environmental Protection and will include daily testing to monitor water quality and measure the effectiveness of the program.

When will the program be conducted?

The first maintenance program of the year is planned for **May 31 through June 20**. If there are any changes in the duration, customers will be notified through a news release and on www.pinellascounty.org/utilities. The second maintenance program for 2016 will take place from **Sept. 6 through Sept. 26**.

Who will be affected?

The program will include all water customers of Pinellas County as well as customers in the cities of Clearwater, Pinellas Park and Safety Harbor.

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

Pinellas County water customers may experience a slight difference in taste and/or smell of 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 that 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?

The water will continue to meet federal and state standards for safe drinking water during this program; however, customers may notice a slight difference in taste and/or smell.

Do I need to boil the water?

No, boiling the water is not necessary.

Why are we not staying with chlorine?

When Tampa Bay Water began distributing blended water to its customers in 2002, the disinfectant agent was changed from chlorine to chloramine to ensure compliance with Environmental Protection Agency standards for compounds that may be formed during the disinfection process. 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 disinfection byproducts are related to long-term exposure and not short term maintenance actions.

Will the program affect dialysis patients?

Users of kidney dialysis machines should not be impacted but 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?

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

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, how can I find more information?

For more information, please visit www.pinellascounty.org/utilities or contact Pinellas County Utilities Customer Service at (727) 464-4000.