

## IF IT'S BROWN, YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO FLUSH IT DOWN

Brown, red, orange, or yellow water is caused by rust in the water. The different colors can be attributed to varying chemical oxidation states of the iron (rust) and by varying concentrations of the rust in the water. There are two major sources that can cause water to be rusty: 1) The district's water mains or 2) the water pipes in your house, apartment, or business.

Water District 19's annual flushing program normally removes any sediment accumulated in the mains serving the majority of our customers. However, in areas of low flow where aging pipes contribute rust and sediment, discoloration of the water can occur.

If an unusual flow of water through the main occurs, this sediment can become disturbed and temporarily suspended in the water causing a brown, red, orange, or yellow color. Unusual water flows are commonly caused by a broken water main, district repairs or replacement of water mains, fire hydrant operations, or fire hydrants being knocked off its base due to an accident. This type of disturbance usually lasts anywhere from two to four hours after which time the sediment will settle out and the water will clear. **Please be reassured that discolored water is not a health threat.**

If you, your child, or your pet happens to drink some of the discolored water it will not make you sick. As the rust can stain clothing, it is best to wait several hours for the water to clear before doing any laundry. Also, do not use any hot water as you may draw this rusty water into your hot water tank, which may have to be flushed out later. If you were doing laundry when the water becomes discolored, rewash the laundry later when the water clears. Use a rust stain remover or regular detergent (available at most hardware and grocery stores). **DO NOT USE CHLORINE BLEACH!** Chlorine reacts with iron and can form a permanent stain.

Some of the discolored water problems can also be caused by older pipes in your home, apartment or business. Some common indications that the problem may be coming from the customer's plumbing include:

- The water is discolored every morning or when first used after several hours of disuse (or you've been on vacation for a while).
- The water clears after it has run for a few minutes.
- The discoloration is only at one or several faucets, but not all of them.
- The discoloration is only in the hot water.

If you are still not sure if the discolored water is due to your plumbing or if it's coming from Water District 19's water mains, do the following:

- Immediately turn off the faucet
- Take a clean glass or a white bowl and go to an outside faucet (hose bib) at the front of your residence, apartment, or business. This faucet is usually nearest the main water shut-off valve for your property.
- Turn the water on wide-open and run it for a full two minutes. Check your watch - two minutes is a long time.
- Refill your glass or white bowl to see how the water looks.

Depending on the situation, if the water is clear at your front faucet after the two minutes, the problem could be your plumbing. If the water at the front tap is still discolored after two minutes, try running it for a full five minutes. If it does not clear up after that amount of time, it is likely coming from our distribution system.

Please contact us at 206-463-9007 and report the situation. If you call after hours, please leave a message that includes your name, address, telephone number, and a brief description of your problem or request. We will return your call at the earliest opportunity.

Water District 19 is working for you to give you the best drinking water in the industry!