

## **Water Quality Maintenance Program FAQs**

### ***Why are the region's water providers conducting a water quality maintenance program?***

The region's water providers - Lancaster County Water and Sewer District, Union County Public Works, are committed to providing safe and reliable water to our residents and businesses. As part of our continuing effort to supply you with clean drinking water, we are joining together to conduct an annual Water Quality Maintenance Program.

The program will use a maintenance process that is recommended by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control (SC DHEC), and North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NC DEQ).

This program temporarily switches our water disinfectants from chloramines to chlorine for one month to help maintain the system and provide the highest quality water year-round.

### ***Why switch from chloramines to chlorine as part of the program?***

Switching from chloramines to chlorine for disinfection at the water plant maintains the water quality of the distribution system by:

- Removing any biofilm and bacteria from the water distribution system mains;
- Reducing the formation of nitrates and nitrites (nitrification); and
- Reducing any taste and odor issues.

### ***How long will the water quality maintenance program take to complete?***

The planned dates are March 1, through April 15, 2026. After the maintenance program is completed, the water plant will resume using chloramines.

### ***What other water quality-related steps will be taken under the program?***

Water utilities use fire hydrant flushing to move the chlorine-disinfected water through the system faster. As part of the maintenance program, utility crews will be using hydrant flushing to maintain the system, ensure high water quality, and reduce the chlorine odor and taste during the temporary switch.

### ***Is the water safe to drink and use during the water quality maintenance program?***

Yes, the water is completely safe to consume and use. The water being produced and distributed to customers during this period will continue to meet all federal and state water quality standards. As always, testing will be conducted to confirm the quality of the water.

Although most customers will not notice any difference in their water, Lancaster County Water and Sewer District recommends three groups of water users take the following precautions prior to March 1. These customers are specifically advised to contact us or seek professional advice about the appropriate steps they should take to accommodate for the change in water disinfection.

- Kidney dialysis providers/patients;
- Fish, pond, pool and aquarium owners/operators; and
- Businesses that use water in their production process.

### ***Will I notice any changes to my water during the program?***

Most customers may not notice any change in the water. Some customers may see some of the following during this maintenance process:

- A slight discoloration or cloudiness in the water;
- A slight chlorine odor or taste;
- Minor fluctuations in water pressures while flushing is occurring; and
- Minor discoloration in the water due to the flushing the system.

***What should I do if I experience any discoloration or odor?***

If the water is discolored or cloudy, flush the water using a faucet for a few minutes to clear; it will not clog your aerators. Using an outside spigot or a tub faucet will help the problem clear faster.

***Could the changes in the water treatment cause rashes or other concerns?***

Drinking water treated with chlorine has not been directly linked to rashes and other reactions, including hair loss. Studies have shown that underlying or pre-existing conditions can lead to some minor irritations.

For sensitive individuals, a Vitamin C tablet added to bath water can minimize the chlorine. You can also consider installing filters on faucets and showers. If you are experiencing a rash that you are concerned about, you may want consult a dermatologist.

***Why not just stay with chlorine for the water treatment?***

While chlorine is a stronger disinfectant, chloramines are a better long-term treatment option because chlorine does not last as long in our region's systems. Chloramines provide long-lasting disinfection benefits with minimal disinfection by-products. It is also more stable in our water distribution systems and it improves odor and taste.

***Why is the water quality maintenance program being performed now?***

It is ideal that this maintenance activity be performed in the spring or fall of the year, when usage is low. Performing a major flushing operation in the summer months creates a production issue for the water plant and lowers system pressures. Flushing water mains during winter months creates other problems, such as freezing roads and sidewalks.