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Discolored Water – The Cause and Cure

There may be times when you experience discolored water coming from your tap. The discoloration is a result of sediment in the pipes becoming agitated and fine particles that travel in the water. This is unavoidable. Ground water naturally contains minerals which can interact with plumbing and create sediment in the plumbing. The Grafton Water District treats the water using the Department of Environment (DEP) guidelines to ensure it is safe to use.

There are many reasons which are unavoidable. The following are some of the causes:

- If only the hot water is discolored then the sediment is coming from your hot water tank. Even “tankless” hot water heaters have a small tank which can collect sediment. Hot water tanks need to be flushed out from time to time to remove the sediment. When the water level in the tank gets low it picks up sediment from the bottom.
- Flushing the hydrants can stir up the sediment. Several municipalities and businesses get water from the hydrants. The fire department, street sweeping, hydro-seeders and pool water suppliers are the primary users. This demand is mostly in the summer, but the fire department fills their trucks year round. The GWD may flush out the hydrants from time to time especially after a water main break.
- The GWD has one well that we only use when the demand is high and the other three wells cannot supply enough water. This primarily occurs in the summer as well.

What to do when you see discolored water.

- Run the water through the tap until it clears. Discoloration is temporary and clears up pretty quickly.
- A filter on your tap water may prevent the sediment from getting through. You should change filters regularly.
- Avoid laundering. The discoloration may also taint your laundry. Run the clothes through the wash machine again (after the discoloration clears) to remove the stains. **DO NOT USE BLEACH.** Bleach interacts with the iron minerals and can make it worse.
- It is safe to bathe in, but if the discoloration bothers you delay bathing until the water clears.
- The water is safe to drink, but I am sure you will find this difficult. Let the water stand and the sediment will drop to the bottom of the container which will cause the water to clear. You can also delay drinking it until the water clears.