TASTE AND ODORS IN DRINKING WATER, CHLORINE AND SULFUR

CHLORINE

With the addition of carbon filtration, Surfside’s water quality recently improved. The improved water quality has resulted in a significantly lower chlorine demand in the distribution system. The lower demand in the distribution system results in higher chlorine residual or more chlorine taste and odor.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) requires public water system maintain a chlorine residual throughout the distribution system. Maintaining a chlorine residual so that the water is safe is the water department’s highest priority, therefore, we have carefully and gradually adjusted the chlorine dose to maintain an effective chlorine residual and reduce chlorine taste and odor complaints.

Most of the distribution system has returned to effective chlorine levels seen prior to carbon filtration. There are a few sections of the distribution system that are experiencing objectionable chlorine taste and odor conditions:

Prior to carbon treatment, members who live on J Place nearby the plant would have the highest chlorine residuals. These members have become accustom to some taste and odor of chlorine in their water.

Post carbon treatment has resulted in higher chlorine residuals throughout the distribution system. The result is many more members are noticing a chlorine taste and odor where they did not in the past.

Although the chlorine residuals are higher than Surfside is used to, they are not considered high levels of chlorine. The maximum level of chlorine in drinking water is 4.0 mg/L. Municipalities often chlorinate well above the levels at Surfside.

Surfside Water Department is currently working with the state to review a couple options which may keep chlorine levels up at a safe level while also reducing the taste and smell of chlorine.

SULFUR

Sulfur taste and smell in drinking water is almost always caused by water heaters. Water heaters have sacrificial anodes designed to keep the tank from corroding. The corrosion of the anodes can create a nasty sulfur smell.

You can easily diagnose sulfur smells from a water heater: 1) Outside cold water taps will never smell of sulfur if the smell is caused by the water heater. 2) Interior hot water taps will almost always smell the strongest of sulfur if the water heater is the culprit.