



WATER DISINFECTANT SHORTAGE FAQs

Q) *What is chlorine in the form of sodium hypochlorite, and why do we need it?*

A) Chlorine in the form of sodium hypochlorite is used in water treatment disinfection. It is required in very small amounts by Oregon Health Authority for public health and safety to provide continuous protection all the way to our customers' taps. As a form of water treatment, chlorination has proven effective against bacteria and viruses, and is the most widely used method for disinfecting water supplies in the United States.

Q) *Why is there a shortage?*

A) A transformer failure occurred at a distribution facility in Washington, which is impacting the Pacific Northwest and beyond. In addition, a major plant in Louisiana experienced a fire in late 2020 that decimated their chlorine manufacturing capabilities, and national production and shipping has been impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q) *Why can't the Commission use a different vendor?*

A) Most water and wastewater utilities use the same raw materials obtained through the same nationwide distributor. Unfortunately, this puts all utilities using this water treatment method in the same position, although many have less supply on hand than the Commission does.

Q) *Why can't the Commission use a different method of treatment?*

A) There is not an effective, alternative form of treatment other than boiling water.

Q) *When will the Commission's distributor be up and running again?*

A) It is estimated that the distributor will be back online at the end of June 2021, however this does not mean that materials will be shipping on this date. It may be some time before water utilities are receiving regular shipments again.

Q) *What is the Commission doing to reduce sodium hypochlorite usage?*

A) While Oregon Health Authority mandates that a residual amount of chlorine must remain in the water we provide so that it is protected all the way to your tap, our water is effectively disinfected with much less chlorine than the maximum allowable limit, thanks to the high-quality nature of our source supplies.

The Commission is currently working on operational strategies to extend the supply we have, and are asking our customers to voluntarily reduce their water usage. In addition, we will be increasing the flow from our Big Butte Springs water source, which requires less disinfection than our Rogue River source.

Q) *My water is cloudy; is it still safe to drink?*

- A) In an effort to extend the supply of sodium hypochlorite we have, we will be increasing the flow from our Big Butte Springs water source on Friday, June 18, 2021, as this source requires less disinfection than our Rogue River source.

Increasing the flow results in an excess of air in the pipelines, causing the water to appear cloudy. This cloudiness will dissipate over time, and is due to air bubbles, not poor water quality. The water remains safe to drink.

Q) *Is the Commission reducing their water usage as well?*

- A) Just as we ask our customers to do, the Commission is also taking steps to reduce water usage operationally, such as postponing hydrant flushing activities for a later date, and reducing/modifying landscape watering schedules at our facilities.

Q) *Will we be going to mandatory curtailment of water usage?*

- A) Since it is not yet known how long this supply issue will last, these voluntary usage reductions will remain in place until demand levels come down and the supply chain has been reestablished. If demand continues to remain at high levels or increases, mandatory restrictions may be imposed. We will keep our customers informed of the situation as it develops.

Q) *What about protection from fire?*

- A) You do not have to stop watering completely. Water usage for the protection of public health and safety is still permitted.

Q) *Should I be boiling my water?*

- A) At this time, there is no need to boil your water.

Q) *Is the Commission limiting the use of the local bulk water filling stations to domestic use only and prohibiting agricultural use?*

- A) In addition to voluntary water usage reductions, the Commission is restricting use of the two bulk water filling stations in Jackson County (located at the City of Medford Service Center, 821 N. Columbus in Medford, and 724 Antelope Road in White City), to domestic use only. Use of water from these stations for agricultural purposes is prohibited.

For information regarding resources for water for agricultural purposes, please call the Jackson County Watermaster's office at (541) 774-6880. As the Rogue Valley's trusted municipal water provider, it is our responsibility to protect the municipal water supply for our customers, and this restriction will still allow for users that require water from these stations for their daily domestic needs.