

## **Imported Water FAQ's**

*In October 2013, the City's water wells began to run dry, forcing the City to use imported water as the City's main water source for the first time in the history of the City. The change in the source of water has caused discolored water to come out of some faucets.*

### **What is causing water to be coming out of my faucets brown or yellow?**

The City has had to change the source of its water. As of early October, the City has switched to water imported from the Colorado River via San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District through the pipeline on Grand View operated by Metropolitan Water District (MWD).

The chemistry of the imported water is significantly different from that of the City's groundwater. The total dissolved solids (TDS) content of the imported water is over twice as much as that of our groundwater. The imported water is treated with chloramines versus the free chlorine the City has traditionally treated with. The imported water is more acidic than local groundwater.

The result of these differences in water conditions is that the imported water releases decades of rust and mineral deposits from inside the City's water distribution pipelines and from galvanized plumbing in homes and businesses. The rust suspended in the water gives the water its color.

### **Is the discolored water unhealthful?**

The discolored water is not considered unhealthful by the California Department of Public Health. While the appearance and taste of the initial flush of water from faucets is assuredly unappealing, it has not been deemed as unhealthful.

### **Will the discolored water kill my plants or my landscaping?**

No.

### **Why is the City importing water?**

The East Raymond Basin aquifer from which the City has historically drawn 90 percent of its water has seen water levels drop significantly in the last year, primarily due to the extended drought and record low rainfall. The water levels had reached historic lows. Of the City's four production wells, one had to be shut down because it had started pumping air and the other three were dangerously close to the same condition. The City shut down all of the wells in early October to preserve what was left in the Basin and to allow it to begin to replenish.

Further, the Raymond Basin Management Board, Watermaster for our area has required that both Arcadia and Sierra Madre reduce pumping from the Basin, again to allow the Basin to recover.

While the effect of switching to imported water has been unpleasant, the change in water source was unavoidable. The choice was clear, either take the imported water via the MWD connection, and meet the City's water demand, or continue to pump from the City's wells until the aquifer was depleted, and have a greatly reduced amount of water via Arcadia; about 1/3 of Sierra Madre's normal demand.

### **When will the City return to using its wells to supply water?**

The City will return to use of its groundwater supply as soon as the Basin water supply has increased to levels that are safe to pump. It is envisioned however, that once the City returns to that source of water, it will be at limited amounts to avoid depleting the basin again.

### **Is there anything that Public Works can do to clear the water?**

Public Works is doing everything it can to expedite the process of clearing the water. To ensure that staff has left no stone unturned, the Water Department has consulted with multiple other water providers, three independent water quality consultants, the head of the MWD water quality division, and the California Department of Public Health. All have agreed that the City's course of action has been appropriate and thorough.

### **Why is Public Works wasting water by turning on fire hydrants?**

Flushing water from hydrants is one way that the City reduces the frequency and severity of colored water events. The longer that the water is stationary in the pipelines the greater the amount of the rust deposits that are released. In areas of the distribution system where there is decreased water use/circulation, staff flushes hydrants to check for rust in the lines and to clear any rust that has been released and is suspended in the trapped water. Depending on the location in the city, some of the water runoff goes straight back into the City's settling basins. Otherwise, whenever possible, Public Works captures the water in our water tanker for use in groundwater recharge or irrigation.

### **Does the City have to use the MWD water? I have heard that the City can get water from the City of Arcadia.**

The City has in fact accessed its source of imported water via the City of Arcadia in the past. Indeed that source of water would be preferable to the MWD source as its chemistry is more similar to our groundwater. However, the Arcadia source is problematic in that Arcadia staff has informed us that their customers will have priority over Sierra Madre, and under certain weather and water use conditions they may not be able to provide water to Sierra Madre. The interconnection that we have with Arcadia's system is not capable of providing for all of Sierra Madre's water demand; at best it is a supplemental source for use in other circumstances.

### **What can I do?**

Sierra Madre has many older homes which have galvanized plumbing. Like the City's water mains, the galvanized plumbing is also lined with rust. That rust is attacked by the new water just as the City's system is, and due to the smaller volume of water circulating through a household system, the rust discharge may take longer to completely dissipate from household plumbing than it has from the City's system. Like the City, the best thing that our customers can do is to run water through their plumbing systems. Most will find that the water will clear after a few seconds. Some, who are conservation-minded have captured the flushed water in buckets and used it for irrigation, much like the City tries to do with our flushing operations.

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