



Taste and Odor Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the water safe to drink?

Yes, the water remains safe to drink and use as normal. The taste and odor issue is only aesthetic and does not mean the water is unsafe.

2. What does the water smell or taste like?

Customers may notice an earthy, musty, or pond-like taste or odor.

3. What is causing the taste and odor?

The issue is caused by naturally occurring compounds released by algae in the Boyd Lake Treatment Plant source water system. While these compounds are not a health hazard, people can smell and taste them at very low levels in water.

4. What is the city doing about this?

The city is actively testing water at multiple points throughout the source water system, treatment process, and in the distribution system. Water treatment staff are using this data to optimize drinking water treatment with powdered activated carbon (PAC) at the Boyd Lake Water Treatment Plant.

5. Why can't the city just use a different source?

In a typical year, the City may have more flexibility to switch or blend sources to manage algae-related water quality issues. This year's dry conditions have limited that flexibility, making the issue more difficult to avoid.

6. What can I do at home?

You can continue using the water as normal. If the taste or odor is bothersome, try the following:

- Chill the water before drinking: Cold water has less noticeable taste and odor than room-temperature water.
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator: Letting water sit uncovered or loosely covered in the refrigerator for a short time will help reduce noticeable odor.
- Add lemon, cucumber, mint, or fruit: A small amount of flavoring can help mask earthy or musty taste.
- Use a home water filter designed for taste and odor: Pitcher, faucet-mounted, or refrigerator filters that contain activated carbon may help to reduce taste and odor compounds.
- Replace filter cartridges as recommended: Old or expired filters may be less effective and can sometimes contribute to taste or odor issues.
- Use ice made from filtered or chilled water: Ice can carry the same taste or odor as the tap water it was made from.

7. When will this issue be resolved?

Taste and odor events can vary in duration depending on source water conditions, algae activity, weather, and treatment response. Customers may notice changes from day to day as conditions change. While treatment adjustments are already underway, it may take time for improvements to be fully noticeable throughout the distribution system. The City will continue testing, tracking, and adjusting treatment until the issue is resolved.

8. What are the compounds causing taste and odor in the water?

The two compounds responsible for taste and odor in the water are called Geosmin and 2-Methylisoborneol (2-MIB). These are naturally occurring organic compounds that cause an earthy, musty, or algae-like taste and odor in drinking water and fish. Geosmin and 2-MIB are completely harmless to human health, but people can smell and taste them at extremely low levels. The compounds are produced by algae, often spiking during the summer months when algae grow quickly in lakes and reservoirs.