

Why is my water that color?

By City Manager, Cynthia Raleigh

How many moms and dads out there have yelled at their young children for not flushing the toilet, and the water is still the same color when you flush it? I know it happens because I am guilty of it myself. Ha Ha. Well, this is not your kid's fault; it isn't anyone's fault.

For those who do not know, I have spent many years in the water industry; I have worked in areas that had hard water, areas where water was so soft it didn't need a water softener because even the equipment couldn't do better than Mother Nature, and regions with high such high concentrations of naturally occurring iron, that the water was red at times, and stained clothes, fixtures, and appliances. Regardless of where you live, if you have groundwater as your source, as we do, there will be some mineral in the water that changes its properties of it; hard, soft, or in our case, discoloration.

So why is our water discolored from time to time? When cast iron pipes corrode over time, rust and other pipe materials flake off into the water. Iron and manganese produce a light orange-to-brown color. As with organic material, more pipe materials dislodge when water flows more quickly through service lines. This is why when there is a change in volume or velocity (typically from a water main break, routine flushing, or firefighting), the water may be tinted when coming from the tap.

Please note that our water system is tested daily, as the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality requires. We are responsible for providing water that is potable (safe to drink) and palatable (pleasing to the sight, taste, and smell). Our water is safe, and we have been deemed a Superior Water System by the State of Texas, a distinction many water suppliers do not ever receive, including the company I came from to be your City Manager.

What is the City of Palacios doing about this? We are working with an Engineer who developed a Water and Wastewater Master Plan for the city; that plan outlines all the improvements that need to be done to our system, including replacing the cast iron lines that were installed years ago when that was the construction trend. Of course, as with anything else, these projects cost a lot of money, and we are doing a better job planning these much-needed improvements. Until then, you may still yell at your kids from time to time; whether it be their fault or the cast iron pipes, it keeps them on their toes.

For your information:

The source of our water is the Gulf Coast Aquifer. More information about our water source can be found by visiting www.twdb.texas.gov/groundwater/aquifer/majors/gulf-coast.asp

You can find out more about our water by visiting www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater Type in Palacios in the Water System section and clicking on the City of Palacios when results populate.