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August 3, 2020

Your Water is Changing

On **August 26, 2020** Pasco County Utilities (PCU) will be changing from the use of chlorine as a water disinfectant to chloramines in the water in the Crystal Springs service area. PCU already complies with all current water quality regulations; however, this change is being made to comply with federal water quality standards under the National Safe Drinking Water Act. This disinfectant change has already occurred in the central, southwest and west service areas of PCU, and the same water source will be supplying your service area.

What are Chloramines?

The main difference between "chlorination" as is currently practiced by PCU and "chloramination" is the presence of small amounts of ammonia in the water.

Chloramination is basically adding a small amount of ammonia to water in the treatment process along with chlorine thereby forming chloramines on combined chlorine.

In Florida, chloramines are used by at least 30 water utilities including the cities of Tampa, St. Pete, New Port Richey and Pinellas and Hillsborough counties. But like chlorine, chloramines must be removed from water before it is used for two specific purposes:

- Kidney dialysis
- Fish and aquatic life

Kidney Dialysis and Chloramines

How does the use of chloramines affect kidney dialysis centers and patients?

Kidney dialysis patients can safely drink, cook and bathe in chloraminated water. Chloramines are only harmful if they directly enter the bloodstream. Since water is exposed to the bloodstream during hemodialysis, very strict water purification standards are already followed by the kidney dialysis industry.

Water purification techniques used for kidney dialysis are already designed to remove both chlorine and chloramines. Industry standards require that a nurse, technician or trained caregiver test for both chlorine and chloramines after the purification process to ensure that these chemicals have been removed from the water before it can be used in the dialysis machine.

All kidney dialysis patients, even those that receive their treatments from a trained relative or caregiver at home, must be under the care of a kidney dialysis center. All centers in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties, as well as hospitals with acute dialysis facilities, have been informed about the addition of chloramines.

Fish, Aquatic Life & Pets

How does this use of chloramines affect aquarium fish, pond fish and other aquatic life?

Since fish and other aquatic animals take chloramines directly from the water into their bloodstreams through their gills, chloramines, like chlorine, must be removed from water used for keeping live saltwater and fresh fish and other aquatic life including Koi fish, lobster, shrimp, frogs, turtles, snails, clams and live coral.

Water conditioners specifically designed for removing both chlorine and chloramines are commercially available. Pet stores or pet supplies will be able to provide information on de-chloramination products and instruction. This process is similar to what you may already be doing to remove chlorine from your aquarium water. Some people; however, may simply let the water sit for a while before they use it so the chlorine will dissipate. Chloramines will not dissipate in this manner, and specific treatment is required.

Will chloraminated water be safe for my dog or cat?

Yes, it is.

Swimming Pools

Is chloraminated water safe for my swimming pool?

Yes. No additional treatment should be necessary. However, you will find that there is a slight increase in chlorine demand. That means that you will have to add a little more chlorine than usual to get the level you typically maintain in the pool after you top it off with chloraminated tap water. Always follow your pool dealer's recommendation for proper pool maintenance and water chemistry.

Water Quality

Will I notice a difference in the taste or odor of my water?

When chloramines are used instead of chlorine, most people report an improvement in the way their drinking water tastes and smells because they no longer detect chlorine in the water.

Will there be any noticeable difference in my water due to the switch to chloramines?

During the conversion process, temporary impacts may be noticed in isolated areas as the chloraminated water is introduced into the distribution system. Some customers may notice a temporary variation in water color as well as possible sediment in the water for a day or two. These temporary impacts to water quality are normal and occur when routine flushing maintenance is performed on the water distribution system and will cease as the system stabilizes. Most problems can usually be resolved by running cold tap water for 2 to 3 minutes. In certain areas, residents may notice flushing of the water system at fire hydrants and other locations, which will help prepare the system for the change.

Will I see a drop in water pressure due to the flushing?

Most customers will not see a drop in water pressure. If a change in pressure does occur, it usually lasts for less than half an hour. If you experience a significant loss of water pressure lasting longer than 30 minutes, please contact the Pasco County Utilities (PCU) Customer Service Department.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any concerns about the new drinking water at:
1-800-226-8144 or (813) 929-2755 during normal business hours or visit pascocountyfl.net.