



Questions and Answers about Rusty or Yellowish Water

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RUSTY WATER

From time to time I get rustyw looking water at home. Sometimes I can even see little specks of rust floating in the water. What is the cause of this, and what should I do when it happens?

During this changeover to MWRA water, there has been a change in flow in the pipes that can cause rusty water. Lynn and the MWRA are aware of the problem. The rusty water, or red water, named after the red or black rust specks you asked about, occurs when there is an increase or change in water flow, largely caused by water main breaks, fire hydrant activations, and flow direction changes made by local towns. These occurrences knock off small particles of rust and stir up sediments in the pipes. It is a temporary condition that usually clears up in a couple of hours. Your local water department should know what is happening at that particular time, and how long the condition should last. **If possible, you should refrain from using the water for laundry, dishes, cooking and drinking until the condition clears up.** Lynn does not expect this problem to last longer than several hours.

YELLOWISH WATER

Sometimes, I get yellowishw looking water from my tap. It stains our bathroom and kitchen fixtures and also our laundry. Why is this happening? Is it safe to use? How can we remove the stains?

MWRA water, which comes from the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs, sometimes turns yellowish from low levels of dissolved iron picked up from old iron pipes in both our system and your community's water system. This mainly occurs in winter, when water usage is low, because the water sits in the pipes for a longer period of time. The water may not be aesthetically pleasing, but according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), increased levels of iron that produce yellow water are not public health threats. Hardware stores have inexpensive products to remove rust stains from clothing and household surfaces. MWRA and customer communities replace or rehabilitate old pipes a few miles at a time, an expensive and timeo consuming process. Longo term solutions take time, but we are constantly cleaning and replacing as much pipe as we can.