
Hot Weather Leads To Water Quality Hot Spots

South Gippsland Water continues to tackle the challenges that the regions numerous small local catchments and water supplies present. Over recent weeks summer conditions have led to water quality being impacted across many of the Corporations serviced townships.

Hot summer weather is particularly challenging as the Corporation is dealing with a number of factors that impact on water quality;

- Hot weather leads to increased demand for water, causing higher pressure and flows in the pipe network.
- The ground is drying out causing it to move and crack pipes which also leads to pressure and flow fluctuations.
- This change in pressure and flows stirs up manganese sediments in the pipes which leads to discoloured water.
- The hot sunny conditions lead to algae blooms in water storages, further impacting the taste and smell of the water.

South Gippsland Water operates 10 separate water supply systems. Unlike water supplied to Melbourne, locally water is sourced from open catchments, meaning that water is sourced from the region where we live and work. The catchment is impacted by industry, homes, farms and roads which contribute to the quality of the water in rivers, reservoirs and ultimately at the customers tap.

Algae

Some customers in the Inverloch, Wonthaggi & Cape Paterson areas may have noticed that the taste of the water changes during summer when there is less fresh cool water entering reservoirs and increased sunshine for algae to grow and thrive upon.

The Lance Creek Water supply system experienced an algal bloom this past week that is currently affecting the taste of water in some parts of these townships.

There are many varieties of algae and any algae bloom that occurs at the reservoir is managed to ensure water supplied to customers is safe to drink. South Gippsland Water must ensure water supplied meets the water quality standards outlined in the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

Human senses are very sensitive to the taste and smell that algae produce. Algae can give off a musty and muddy taste and odour. When algae are present in reservoirs, South Gippsland Water activates increased monitoring and treatment processes to remove it, however, due to human sensitivity (some algae can be tasted in parts per trillion, i.e. think of filling the MCG with water and then adding half a teaspoon of these compounds - that is how sensitive we are! It is therefore quite challenging to manage.

Managing Director South Gippsland Water, Philippe du Plessis, said today, "Customers should rest assured South Gippsland Water will continue to monitor the reservoir water and treatment processes and are constantly adapting to changing conditions and the changed taste in water. The taste and smell of the water is expected to fluctuate over the coming weeks as this occurrence is managed".

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Discoloured Water & Manganese

A number of customers in townships including Korumburra, Poowong, Loch, Nyora, Foster & Toora have reported discoloured water. The colour in the water is due to the presence of a naturally-occurring mineral, known as manganese.

Managing Director of South Gippsland Water Philippe du Plessis commented, “This mineral is present in all of our systems, however, small amounts pass through the water treatment processes and sediments settle to the bottom of the pipe reticulation network where they don’t cause problems for our customers.

Hot summer conditions have led to high pressure and flows within water supply systems coupled with burst water mains which cause sediments to be stirred up and enter the flow to customers’ taps. The manganese sediments tend to give the water a yellow through to brown or “dirty” appearance”.

Mr du Plessis went onto say that, “please be assured the water is safe to drink, however it is not advised to drink heavily discoloured water. South Gippsland Water field officers are working hard to ensure maximum possible removal of manganese at the treatment plants and undertaking flushing of the systems following reports of discoloured water”.

Mr du Plessis wished to reiterate that the Corporation is using all tools available to deal with both the effects of algae and manganese on water supplies. However, I urge customers to please contact the Corporation’s friendly Customer Service Team available **24 hours, 7 days a week, on 1300 851 636** to discuss any water quality issues or concerns.



Image: Todd Lomax of South Gippsland Water inspects a sample taken from a flushing point at Korumburra

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