



Vauxhall & District Regional Water Services Commission

Noticeable Water Taste/Odour Issues

UPDATE #3: Noticeable Water Taste/Odour Issues

Date: December 8th, 2022

The Vauxhall and District Regional Water Services Commission is providing a new status update concerning the noticeable (musty/earthy) taste and odour water issues in Vauxhall, Enchant, and Hays.

Operators continue to follow the recommendations from Alberta Environment and MPE Engineering. ***It is important to note that water continues to meet all Alberta Environment approvals and drinking water standards.***

The recent flushing of regional distribution lines and the continual application of powder-activated carbon (PAC), often used to mitigate taste/odour issues, have yielded noticeable improvements based on taste tests and some community feedback.

The unpleasant taste and odour may appear that the water is “off” and not safe to drink. However, the municipal water supply remains safe to drink during these episodes. ***Seasonal taste and odours in drinking water are not a threat to public health.***

Taste and odour episodes are a natural phenomenon caused by seasonal biological changes in the source water, producing odour-causing organic compounds. Even very tiny concentrations of these compounds can result in an earthy/musty taste and odour in water. Most municipalities in Alberta which

obtain their water supply from surface water sources experience this problem periodically starting in the summer or early fall.

As treated water continually passes through the entire regional system to the end of the distribution lines, it will take some additional time for residents to see continued improvement in the Town of Vauxhall and the Hamlets of Enchant and Hays.

The Vauxhall and District Regional Water Services Commission is making every effort to reduce the impact of taste and odour episodes. The Water Treatment Plants are equipped with various filtration systems designed to reduce the effects of taste and odour but may require additional time to eliminate the problem entirely. The taste and odour episodes vary from year to year; therefore, the issues may not be resolved rapidly.

For any questions or to submit feedback, please submit using Service Tracker:

<https://www.mdtaber.ab.ca/p/service-tracker>

Category Type: Utility Services

Request Type: Potable Water

This will help us to better track, monitor and respond accordingly.

Frequently Asked Questions

As we observe a current increase in online complaints/comments about water taste and odour, we thought we would address some frequently asked questions in circulation.

1. *How do we know our water is safe to drink?*

Tap water from the Vauxhall Water Treatment Plant is continuously tested, monitored and analyzed to ensure it meets the strict standards of the Province of Alberta and the Government of Canada.

In the hot summer months, residents can expect typical, seasonal taste and odour changes to our municipal drinking water. These changes are most often a musty/earthy taste or odour to their drinking water or a noticeable increase in the taste/odour of chlorine. If you detect earthy or musty odours in your drinking water, please note that it is still safe to drink.

Many municipalities which get their water supply from surface water sources experience this problem periodically. While changes in the taste and odour may be unpleasant for some with a sensitive sense of taste and smell, these changes only affect the aesthetic qualities of the water and do not impact water safety. ***A boil water advisory would likely be the first sign of any genuinely unsafe drinking water situation for any reason.***

2. *What causes the taste odour occurrences?*

Taste and odour occurrences caused by seasonal biological changes in the source water produces naturally occurring compounds. These occurrences happen especially during hot weather when water temperatures rise and the water levels are lower. Even very tiny concentrations of these compounds in water can result in a musty/earthy taste and odour. The solution requires higher levels of chlorination to treat.

We refer to this as taste and odour episodes. During these episodes, tap water supplied by the municipal water supply systems remains safe to drink and is not harmful to public health. Our water treatment plants are designed with processes to reduce the effects of taste and odour, but these may not eliminate it entirely.

3. *When does the musty taste and odour occur?*

Although occurrence frequencies are difficult to predict, these naturally occurring compounds generally can occur anytime from the end of August through November each year. It was previously understood that taste and odour events only occurred periodically. It is now believed that the events likely occur each year, but the intensity can vary widely.