Frequently asked questions – Water discolouration

In October 2026, residents in the Rose Valley Water Service Area reported some discolouration in their water. This was due to seasonal changes creating operational challenges combined with a minor mechanical issue in the permanganate feed system. In consultation with Interior Health, water quality continued to meet the required drinking water guidelines, and no advisory needed to be issued.

Please, learn more about our updates in our Oct. 5,9 and Oct. 15 public service announcements. As we receive questions from residents, we will update this document.

When will the discoloration end?

The turbidity and manganese concentrations at the treatment plant have returned to normal operating levels. As a result, any residual discoloured water within the distribution system will require time to be flushed through the network.

At this time, it is not possible to provide a definitive timeline for water clarity to be fully restored, as flushing rates and water turnover vary throughout different areas of the distribution system. Utility staff will continue to closely monitor manganese levels and overall water quality within the distribution network to ensure parameters return to expected operational ranges.

Where can I find the latest testing data related to this?

The latest data can be found at the RVWSA Dicoloured Water Investigation 2026 document issued on Oct. 15, 2026.

You can also stay up to date on water quality reporting at the Water Quality and Notifications webpage, or find other water data and reports at the Water Data and Reports webpage.

Why has the potassium permanganate system failed?

There was a minor mechanical failure in the feed mechanism for the potassium permanganate. Just like anything, mechanical failures can occur from time to time with these complex systems, and when this happens, staff adjust accordingly. In this instance, with this discolouration challenges still persisting, staff were able to stabilize the discolouration using sodium hypochlorite as has been done before in the past.

When can we expect the potassium permanganate system to be back up and running?

With the change in weather and the resulting impact on the reservoir (turn over), the dosing of potassium permanganate is discontinued as it is no longer necessary. Because of the repairs to the dosing system, sodium hypochlorite will continue until shut down. When the system is turned back on in the spring, the use of potassium permanganate will resume.

How was the decision made to switch back to precipitating manganese with sodium hypochlorite given the risk of elevated disinfection byproducts?

With the mechanical failure and the continuing discolouration, an operational decision was made to stabilize the discolouration that was being experienced. There was no objection from Interior Health to this decision. We do acknowledge the potential of elevated byproducts for the quarter, but we do not expect this to negatively affect the annual average. Disinfection byproducts such as trihalomethanes, are a concern when exposed to elevated levels over long periods of time. As this is expected to be over a short period of time, the risk was deemed minimal as opposed to no action whatsoever.

Did the City conduct concurrent tests of disinfection byproducts to understand the impact of the switch?

Yes, testing is done quarterly beginning in November, but because of the situation, additional testing was begun in coordination with the use of sodium hypochlorite. These test results will all be available in the monthly reports posted on the Water Data page.

Why does the report reference "low levels" of manganese when the reports show manganese over the MAC?

Testing results are shared with Interior Health for them to provide their guidance and expertise on whether an advisory needs to be issued. Some samples at the location closest to the treatment plant did show results slightly above the MAC. With corrective action underway to address the manganese levels, staff were advised by Interior Health to continue monitoring and testing.

How does the City of West Kelowna inform the public about water quality advisories?

If an advisory is required, the City of West Kelowna, in consultation with Interior Health, will:

1. Notify eSubscribers and the media.
    - Sign up at westkelownacity.ca/subscribe to receive notifications.
    - If the area is isolated because of something such as an emergency water main break, operators may instead notify residents by going door to door. If the impacted area is large or expands, and going door to door cannot be done quickly, the City will use its notification systems.
    - If work is planned, operators may notify residents by sending a letter in advance of scheduled maintenance.
2. Post information on our website on our News page and Water Quality and Notifications page.
3. Post information on our social media feeds – Facebook, Instagram, and X.
4. Update our interactive map so residents can see if their address is in the advisory area.
5. Provide an alternative source of water at the bulk filling station at Shannon Lake and Asquith Roads. Bring clean bottles for filling.

When should you call the city about water quality?

Contact us at utilities@westkelownacity.ca or call us at 778-797-2246 if you notice your tap water is discoloured, if you lose service, if pressure suddenly becomes extremely low, if you see a watermain break or if you notice someone tampering with water infrastructure, or any other water-related requests. If calling after hours, dial option 1 to reach the on-call operator.

By contacting us first, we can prioritize issues and resolve them faster and, if an advisory is needed, we can notify customers as soon as possible.

Is there a plan with dates for reservoir oxygenation, backup pre-oxidant dosing with continuous manganese monitoring and alarms, and cleaning of the distribution mains?

The City has been actively reviewing reservoir oxygenation options, unfortunately this has come with some challenges and there is not a definitive date for this. Thankfully, the Rose Valley treatment plant delivers high-quality water. The permanent pre-oxidant system is anticipated to go to tender prior to the end of 2026. Monitoring and alarms will be included with this if/where necessary to augment existing equipment. Flushing of distribution mains is part of our annual maintenance activities; this will continue in 2027 if water scarcity concerns don't increase over the upcoming winter months.

Why was a $75 million plant built without treatment for dissolved manganese when the issue was already known?

Health Canada changed the guidelines for manganese in May 2019, introducing a new maximum acceptable concentration of 0.12 mg/L and lowering the aesthetic objective to 0.02 mg/L. The Rose Valley Water Treatment Plant was already in the process of being designed at that time. Upon completion of the plant, the City installed a pre-oxidation system that allows the treatment process in the plant to remove manganese. Further improvements to this system are planned to be completed in spring 2027 to improve the system.

How will the City notify every affected household directly and immediately for discolouration events like this one, as well as formal advisories?

The City does not have the tools or ability to immediately and directly notify every household in our community for non-emergency situations. You may be aware that the province will issue Emergency Alerts to TV, radio and cell phones to provide urgent public safety information during life-threatening emergencies such as evacuation orders for a quick moving wildfire.

When there is an action that we are asking residents to take (for example with water quality when we are advised to issue an advisory by Interior Health) we have a number of channels and methods to notify residents. Staff are currently discussing the types of notifications we provide to residents and when we provide them, as well as evaluating our processes to make sure our community is informed.

We appreciate your feedback that you expect more communication from the City on this topic.

Here are the current steps we take to notify residents when an advisory is required.

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    b. If the area is isolated because of something such as an emergency water main break, operators may instead notify residents by going door to door. If the impacted area is large or expands, and going door to door cannot be done quickly, the City will use its notification systems.
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5. Provide an alternative source of water at the bulk filling station at Shannon Lake and Asquith Roads. Bring clean bottles for filling.

IS there an interim bill credit, or a rebate toward home filtration for affected households until the permanent fix is complete?

The City will not be providing rebates or bill credits for this.