



## Frequently Asked Questions about St. Louis Park's Water System

### **How hard is St. Louis Park's water?... 18 grains of hardness**

The minerals calcium and magnesium cause water to be hard. These minerals are found in ground water throughout Minnesota, including St. Louis Park. If you are bothered by hard water, you should know that St. Louis Park's water hardness is at a level (18 grains) that responds well to a home-softening device. We recommend installing a softener only on the hot water supply or leaving the kitchen tap unsoftened. That way, you'll avoid adding salt to your drinking water, which can change the taste. It is important to remember softeners require regular maintenance, regeneration, and the purchase of salt.

### **Why is my water discolored?**

Drinking water often looks cloudy when first taken from a faucet and then it clears. The cloudy water is caused by tiny air bubbles. This occurs more often in the winter, when the drinking water is cold. ["Plain Talk About Drinking Water" by Dr. James M. Symons, Fourth Edition.] Yellow or reddish-brown (root beer colored) water is not harmful to your health; however, rusty colored water doesn't look very attractive and it can stain clothes during washing and the fixtures. Although the city's water treatment plants are designed to remove the iron, excessive iron may occasionally occur. The cause of the discoloration is excessive iron in the water, or iron that has built up in the pipes and breaks loose, causing the water to turn yellow. Many times it is your home water system pipes that were bumped, breaking loose iron, causing the water to turn yellow. Run cold water in your sink for a time to see if it will clear (save water for plants). If the problem persists, call the Utilities Division at 952-924-2558.

### **Where does the City of St. Louis Park get its water?**

St. Louis Park's water originates deep underground in the Mt. Simon-Hinckley, Prairie Du Chien-Jordan, and St. Peter aquifers. The City of St. Louis Park managers 11 wells drilled into these huge, naturally-occurring underground reservoirs. The depth of the swells varies from 286 ft. to 1,095 ft. The Mt. Simon-Hinkley well is 300 feet deeper than the IDS building is tall!

### **What does the City do to treat our water?**

St. Louis Park water is disinfected to eliminate microorganisms. Fluoride is added to enhance children's dental protection. The nuisance minerals iron and manganese are removed from the water by aeration and filtration. Radium is removed through chemical injection and filtration. Organic contaminants are removed from two wells by granular activated carbon filtration.

### **Is there fluoride in the water?**

The State of Minnesota requires municipal water suppliers to add fluoride to enhance children's dental protection.

For more information on fluoride in drinking water, visit the American Water Works Association (AWWA)

website.<http://www.drinktap.org/consumerdnn/Home/WaterInformation/Fluoridation/tabid/184/Default.aspx>

### **Who should I call about water rates and water bills?**

The City's Finance Department at 952-924-2611

### **Is there radium in my water?**

Yes. The current levels of radium in our water are below federal drinking water standards. The water is sampled for radium on a regular basis.

Over the course of a lifetime, some people who drink water containing radium in excess of the maximum allowable levels (5.4 picoCuries of radium per liter of water) may have an increased cancer risk ranging from 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 1,000,000. To reach this risk level, however, a person would have to drink approximately two liters of water a day for 70 years.

There are additional chemical treatments installed in the water treatment plants that are closest to elevated levels of radium (but still below the federal standards). These treatments do a good job lowering the level of radium.

### **What are alpha emitters?**

Alpha emitters are a form of energy which indicate the presence of radium. When radium decays it gives off energy in the form of alpha emitters. Alpha emitters are components of rock and soil that can work their way into groundwater. Alpha emitters are a naturally occurring form of energy—not the result of man-made pollution. While the amount of radium may be stable, the level of alpha emitters can vary.

### **Do I need a home water system?**

We have provided a link directly to the Minnesota Department of Health web site for information about home water treatment devices.

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/com/fs/pou.html>

### **What can you tell me about Reilly tar contamination?**

#### **Reilly Tar & Chemical Corporation**

From 1917 until 1972, a company owned by the Reilly Tar & Chemical Corporation produced creosote, a wood preservative on 80 acres near Oak Park Village. Spills and wastewater discharge contaminated the soil and groundwater near this area with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's), and low levels of PAH's got into six St. Louis Park wells and one Hopkins well. All six wells were closed, and the area was eventually declared an EPA-Superfund

site. Three wells were abandoned and granular activated carbon filtration units (which remove PAH's from the water) were installed in two wells. These two wells were reopened in 1985. Because the filtration worked so well, one other well was re-opened in 1991. These three wells are tested quarterly for PAH levels, and all other municipal wells are tested twice a year for possible PAH contamination. In 1992, the Minnesota Department of Health completed a public health assessment and concluded that the site does not pose a public health hazard because the level of PAH exposure is far below a level that poses a human health concern. The Health Department's public health assessment is available by contacting the St. Louis Park Water Utility.