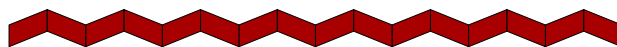




DRINKING WATER



Security & Risk Management Fact Sheet

- ✓ **WHERE DOES THE SCHOOL'S DRINKING WATER COME FROM?**

With the exception of one school, all FCPS schools receive their drinking water from one of the five public water suppliers in the area: Fairfax County (703-698-5800), Fairfax City (703-385-7920), City of Falls Church (703-241-5071), Town of Vienna (703-255-6381), and Town of Herndon (703-435-6853) Water Authorities. These water suppliers draw raw (untreated) water primarily from the following surface water sources: the Potomac River, the Occoquan Reservoir, and the Goose Creek Reservoir.
- ✓ **HOW DO I KNOW THAT THE DRINKING WATER IS SAFE?**

The water suppliers are required to comply with regulations enforced by the Virginia Department of Health that set maximum contaminant levels for more than 80 chemicals as well as for microbiological contaminants. Under these regulations, water suppliers are required to provide drinking water that is free from harmful organisms, minerals, and other organic substances. In addition, suppliers must meet standards for clarity, odor, and taste.
- ✓ **WHAT DO THE WATER SUPPLIERS DO TO MAKE THE WATER SAFE?**

The suppliers filter the raw water to remove any large organic particles and inorganic sediments. The filtered water is then disinfected with chlorine to kill or render harmless microbiological organisms that cause disease. Chlorine is an effective agent against waterborne bacteria, viruses, and some protozoan agents. Also, chlorine provides residual protection to prevent or inhibit microbial growth after the treated water enters the distribution system.
- ✓ **WHY DOES THE WATER SOMETIMES HAVE A DISTINCT CHLORINE TASTE?**

During the months of March, April, and May, you may notice a distinct chlorine taste and odor. Some people say the water smells and tastes like pool water. During these spring months, the suppliers increase the chlorine concentrations in a more aggressive effort to disinfect the distribution system. Allowing drinking water to sit in an open water bottle permits the chlorine to dissipate, which usually improves the taste of the water.
- ✓ **WHY IS THE WATER CLOUDY IN THE SPRING, AS WELL?**

The cloudiness comes from tiny air bubbles that form when cold water rises in temperature as it flows through warmer plumbing. The cause of the cloudiness may be confirmed by allowing a sample of water to rest in a clear container for several seconds. Since air bubbles will float to the surface, the water will clarify from the bottom of the container.
- ✓ **IS FLUORIDE ADDED TO THE WATER?**

Yes, to help prevent tooth decay, a safe amount of fluoride (approximately one part per million) is maintained in the drinking water.
- ✓ **IS DISCOLORED DRINKING WATER A HEALTH THREAT?**

The treatment process the water suppliers use to control taste and odor in the source water will allow for the buildup of manganese along the walls of pipes and basins at the treatment plants. When a disruption of water occurs, such as water main changes, some manganese sediment may dislodge and turn the water to a tea color. This does not pose a health threat. During any disruption, the supplier will typically inform the affected consumers. A simple test can be performed to confirm that the water is disinfected. Contact the Office of Safety and Security at 571-423-2010 to request a water test or contact your supplier.
- ✓ **CAN A FAUCET FILTER SYSTEM IMPROVE DRINKING WATER QUALITY?**

Faucet filters (point-of-use filters) offer no significant improvement to the public water supply to justify the cost of purchase and installation. Also, these point-of-use filters will eventually become contaminated and will require yearly maintenance, adding additional costs.

For more information, visit www.fcwa.org, or www.awwa.org.
If you need assistance, call the Environmental Health section at 571-423-2010.