



**Department of Public Works**  
Water Supply & Water Pollution Control

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**Frequently Asked Questions About Bridgewater Water**  
**January 2023**

**Why do we have discolored water?**

The simple answer is that iron and manganese occur naturally in our water supply. These elements have a tendency to discolor when exposed to oxygen. Water pumped from our 10 main wells is exposed to oxygen during the pumping and treatment processes. Other factors can exacerbate the discoloration when it comes out of your tap:

- The wells located on High Street and Plymouth Street are currently treated but not filtered. Once the water treatment plant on High Street is operational, water going to all locations will be filtered and treated.
- Water main breaks increase volume and stir up sediment in the system.
- Increased usage during the summer months increases the volume of water flowing through the pipes and stirs up sediment.
- Water main flushing. Generally, once or twice a year the Water Department flushes the water mains to keep the sediments from collecting in the pipes. Due to the drought, most routine flushing was not performed in the Fall of 2022.
- Some dead-end streets are not “looped” in our system, meaning it is a dead-end water main. These are difficult to flush and allow excess sediment to collect in the main. The Town no longer permits the installation of dead-end water mains, but there are many pre-existing dead-ends.
- Buildings and homes may need to be flushed. The Water Department’s reach extends to your property line. Hot water heaters are notorious for the build up of sediment causing brown water.

**What should I do if I have brown water?**

Report the issue by logging onto the Town Website [www.bridgewaterma.org](http://www.bridgewaterma.org), click on “Report a Problem”, drop down to “Water Issues” and complete the form. The Town can’t work to address specific issues if we don’t know about them.

**What are the long-term plans to address the brown water issue?**

The Town built a second filtration plant to ensure that all our municipal well water is filtered for iron and manganese prior to being distributed to residents. The plant will open in the spring of 2023 and will give us full iron and manganese filtering coverage for the Town. Temporary brown water issues associated with construction, dead end streets, in-home water system failures, and illegal irrigation or pool filling may continue to surface and will be researched and addressed on an individual, as-needed basis. Any residents experiencing temporary brown water issues should contact the Water Department so we can troubleshoot the issue.

**What is manganese and is it dangerous?**

According to the US EPA, manganese is one of the most abundant metals on the earth's surface, making up approximately 0.1% of the earth’s crust. As a result, it is naturally occurring in many surface and groundwater sources. It is an essential nutrient for humans and animals but there can be health effects from overexposure. For more information, visit <https://www.epa.gov/ccl/regulatory-determination-1-support-documents-manganese>.

### **What is iron and is it dangerous?**

Iron is a naturally occurring element that can be found throughout our air, soil, and water. It is an essential nutrient for humans and animals but there can be health effects from overexposure.

### **How do the Fall 2022 rate increases help with this issue?**

Bridgewater's water infrastructure is funded through the water bills you pay. The rate increases cover the portion of the new filtration plant that could not be covered by state or federal assistance. It also covers the ongoing improvements to the distribution system and plant operations.

### **What are PFAS regulations?**

On September 24, 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced the final regulations for PFAS in drinking water. MassDEP continues to clarify how laboratory results should be calculated and reported. The MassDEP press release can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-establishes-strict-standards-for-pfas-in-drinking-water-to-protect-communities-across-massachusetts> It also promulgated a new drinking water standard for the sum of six PFAS compounds. This new standard is significantly lower than prior guidance. The Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for the sum of PFAS6 may not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), which is equal to 20 parts per trillion (ppt). Federal Drinking water standards do not currently regulate PFAS.

### **What are PFAS?**

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances or PFAS, are a group of numerous human-made chemicals used since the 1950s to manufacture stain-resistant, water-resistant, and non-stick products. Because these chemicals have been used in many consumer products, virtually everyone has been exposed to them. PFAS have been detected in wastewater and even in rainfall around the world. Often referred to as "forever chemicals," PFAS stay in the environment for a long time and do not break down easily. As a result, PFAS may be widely detected in soil, water, air, and food. While consumer products and food are the largest source of exposure to these chemicals for most people, drinking water can be an additional source in communities where PFAS are present in water supplies. For a full list of the communities that have reported pfas, please visit [https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas\\_contamination/map/](https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas_contamination/map/)

### **Do Bridgewater's wells exceed the new pfas limits?**

Bridgewater has 10 wells, all of which are regularly tested for a variety of items, including PFAS. Since the new PFAS requirements were enacted, wells 5 and 6 have tested slightly above the new pfas standard on a few occasions but returned to normal levels on follow-up testing. The remaining wells have never tested above the PFAS limit. Because the water from each well is blended with water from other wells, the water that actually reaches residential homes contains lower levels than are tested at the individual wells. As of December 2022, we are not aware of any water reaching a residence that has tested above state pfas guidelines. The standard PFAS notification letter we have sent in the past is required by state law and was triggered by test results at the two specific wells. All testing results are available on Bridgewater's website at <https://www.bridgewaterma.org/177/Water-Supply-Water-Dept.>

### **Why was the Bluedrop machine installed if our PFAS levels have been within the mandated guidelines?**

We wanted to be proactive by installing a machine that filters for PFAS in case our levels exceed the DEP mandated levels. The Bluedrop machine is located at 151 High Street and is free fill up for our residents.