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Gulf Coast Water Authority Announces Annual Change to Water Disinfection

The Gulf Coast Water Authority (GCWA) will temporarily change its water disinfection process April 12-26, 2021. This annual routine maintenance practice is necessary to maintain water systems operated by GCWA and the Galveston County communities it serves.

The temporary change from a combination of chlorine and ammonia (chloramine) to free chlorine helps to prevent taste and odor problems that can occur during the hottest months of the year. Free chlorine conversions are a common industry practice for preventative maintenance in drinking water distribution & transmission systems. Many utilities throughout the state and country that use chloramines for their primary distribution disinfectant periodically convert back to free chlorine to improve and maintain the highest water quality standards. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) endorse and support this procedure.

GCWA's Thomas Mackey Water Treatment Plant provides drinking water to a number of communities throughout Galveston County. All communities except League City, Friendswood, and Bolivar will be included in the chlorine maintenance.

As part of the disinfection process, municipalities and water districts will flush their systems by opening fire hydrants. Water users may notice some water discoloration or cloudiness. These conditions are harmless and temporary and should be remedied by fire hydrant flushing. The chlorine maintenance process has not been linked to any adverse health effects.

A properly conducted Chlorine Maintenance can often cause the water to have a different taste and/or odor than when using chloramine for disinfection. Customers will likely be able to notice the difference, but there are no health effects associated with the change in taste/odor.

SPECIAL NOTE

Owners of fish and reptiles should follow standard water treatments using products that remove both chlorine and chloramine from the water.

Dialysis centers will continue to treat the water to remove all chemical disinfectants, including chlorine and chloramine, before the water is used for dialysis. Home dialysis users should consult their machine manufacturers for instructions on how to properly treat their water before use.

Water users can contact their local municipality or water district for questions about the water system disinfection.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why does drinking water need to be disinfected?

The disinfection of water has played a critical role in improving drinking water quality in the United States. It has been standard practice in the U.S. for more than a century. In fact, American drinking water supplies are among the safest in the world, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

What are drinking water requirements in Texas and who regulates water quality?

Public water systems are required to disinfect water prior to it entering the distribution system that carries it through pipes to customers. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality regulates drinking water in the state.

Where does drinking water for Galveston County communities served by GCWA come from?

Water from the Brazos River Basin is treated at the Gulf Coast Water Authority's water treatment plant in Texas City. The plant has the capacity to treat more than 50 million gallons of water a day to serve approximately 190,000 consumers in Galveston County.

What kind of water testing is done routinely and what will be done during the maintenance period?

The water treatment plant staff has continuous online analyzers and routinely tests its water every 4 hours, as mandated by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. This level of testing will continue throughout the maintenance period.

What is the list of cities impacted?

Municipalities and water utilities include:

- Bacliff MUD
- Bayview MUD
- Bayou Vista (Galveston County MUD #12)
- Dickinson (Galveston County WCID #1)
- Galveston Island
- Hitchcock
- Kemah (Galveston County WCID #12)
- La Marque
- San Leon MUD
- Santa Fe (Galveston County WCID #8)
- Texas City
- Tiki Island (GCFWSD #6)

What is chloramine and why does the GCWA use it?

Chloramine is an effective disinfectant that works over a long period of time, particularly in areas with high temperatures like Texas.

ABOUT GULF COAST WATER AUTHORITY

GCWA is a special water district that provides water for industry, agriculture and municipalities in Brazoria, Fort Bend and Galveston counties. Read more at <https://www.gulfcoastwaterauthoritytx.gov> and follow GCWA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).