



## **Temporary Switch to Free Chlorine**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Beginning January 27, 2017, and continuing until early March, Citizens Water will temporarily change the disinfectant used in the water treatment process. Citizens will be using free chlorine rather than chloramines during this time period.

#### **Why Would Citizens Temporarily Change from Chloramines to Free Chlorine?**

This temporary, scheduled change in disinfectant is a standard water treatment practice to keep water mains clean and free of potentially harmful bacteria throughout the year.

The temporary use of free chlorine will ensure that a high level of disinfection is maintained throughout the network of water mains and pipes that deliver your drinking water. This temporary change in the water treatment process denies bacteria the ability to form resistance to the usual disinfection treatment process.

Switching to free chlorine is a proactive step to ensure that we maintain optimal levels of disinfection in the water distribution system.

As always, the drinking water will be regularly monitored to ensure that the water delivered meets, or is better than, federal Safe Drinking Water Act standards.

#### **What is Free Chlorine?**

Free chlorine is a slightly stronger disinfectant than chloramines, and is commonly used by drinking water utilities. For utilities that normally use chloramines, free chlorine is used periodically to ensure resistant bacteria and viruses do not grow in the water distribution system.

#### **What is Chloramine?**

Chloramine is a disinfectant used in drinking water to kill bacteria and viruses. It is made up of chlorine and ammonia. Chloramines have been used as the disinfectant in the Indianapolis drinking water system for over 50 years.

#### **Why Does Citizens Use Chloramines Most of the Year?**

While chlorine is an effective disinfectant, using chlorine alone creates byproducts, which are regulated by the US Environmental Protection Agency. We can reduce byproduct levels through the use of chloramines.

Chloramine is a better long-term choice because it produces lower levels of disinfectant by-products like trihalomethanes, improves the smell and odor of water (compared to chlorine), and lasts longer in the distribution system to prevent bacterial growth.



### **When Will the Conversion Occur?**

Beginning Friday, **January 27<sup>th</sup>** and continuing until early March. The change may take a few days to reach some customers due to their distance from a water treatment plant. The exact date for conversion back to chloramines will be dependent on water quality monitoring and progress on some related capital improvement projects.

### **Will I Notice a Difference in My Water?**

Possibly. Some customers may notice a slight change in the taste or smell of their tap water. Free chlorine may have a bit of a chemical odor or smell slightly like water in a swimming pool. Each individual customer has his or her own sensitivity level to the taste and/or odor of free chlorine. Many detect no change at all. The mild chlorine taste and smell is normal and poses no health risk.

### **Are Free Chlorine and Chloramines Safe?**

Yes, both forms of chlorine are effective and safe for people and animals to drink, for cooking and bathing, watering the garden, and for all other common uses. However, precautions must be taken to remove or neutralize chloramines and free chlorine during the kidney dialysis process, in the preparation of water for fish tanks and ponds, and for businesses requiring highly-processed water. A de-chlorination procedure optimized for chloramine removal will work equally well with free chlorine.

Most customers will not need to take any precautions as the water remains safe to drink and is treated according to both state and federal standards.

### **Kidney Dialysis**

Just like chloramines, free chlorine must be removed from water used in kidney dialysis machines. Citizens contacts representatives from the medical community to inform them of this temporary conversion. We advise customers who are dialysis patients to call their physicians or dialysis centers if there are any questions.

### **Fish Owners**

Like chloramines, free chlorine is toxic to fish. Fish owners need to remove chlorine, ammonia and chloramines from the water before use with tropical fish. Local pet stores carry water conditioners that remove chloramines and free chlorine. If customers have questions, we recommend contacting their pet store for information and detailed instructions.