

The City of Fort Scott Water Utility annually or bi annually does a 'burnout' of its potable water distribution system, which affects the majority of Bourbon County and which last for approx 4 weeks.

This is done in order to maintain water quality. If this maintenance is not performed in the water distribution system, the water will eventually lose all of its disinfection residual, which will cause water quality to degrade. Keep reading for more information:

The Fort Scott Water Utility uses a flushing program along with a free chlorine burnout of the water distribution system. This burnout is a part of our necessary maintenance of the distribution system which will help maintain the high water quality that you have come to expect. During this flushing and free chlorine burnout, the water disinfection process will be changed from chloramines to free chlorine which is a stronger and faster-acting disinfectant. Flushing and chlorine burnouts are routine distribution system maintenance conducted by utilities with chloramine disinfection.

There are two common types of chlorine used in water treatment for disinfection purposes, combined chlorine (or chloramines) and free chlorine. Chloramines are created by combining free chlorine with free ammonia. A benefit of using chloramines is that they will retain disinfection residual longer in the distribution system and they do not lend themselves in promoting taste, or a "chlorine" taste in the water. The vast majority of time the City of Fort Scott Water Treatment Plant uses chloramines to disinfect the finished water before entering the distribution system. However, chloramines are not as strong of a disinfectant as free chlorine and it can allow certain types of bacteria to grow in the distribution system. These natural occurring bacteria feed on the ammonia found in our finished water. These bacteria are nonpathogenic – they are not a health concern. Nitrifying bacteria which naturally grow in any distribution system when using chloramines can become prolific in warm summer temperatures. They will eventually cause water quality to degrade in the warmer summer months.

This is why water utilities across the nation do an annual or biannual free chlorine burnout. The term burnout is commonly used because free chlorine is a much more powerful disinfectant than combined chlorine. Free chlorine will oxidize nitrifying bacteria and keep it in check.

The fire hydrants will be utilized to allow flushing of the system to help remove sediment from the pipes and distribute the change in disinfectant. Customers may notice city personnel flushing fire hydrants throughout the city during this period. This free chlorine is pulled through the distribution system by flushing the entire system through fire hydrants, blow-offs, and overflowing water towers. At the end of the free burn, the standard chemicals used for disinfections will be reintroduced to the system and be returned to normal operating conditions.

Occasionally during this process customers may temporarily experience low pressures, taste or odors, discolored water, or even some sediment in their water. During the flushing and burnout you may notice that your tap water tastes different than normal. This is because most people cannot smell or taste combined chlorine in the water, however most people can smell and taste free chlorine in the water. It could also affect the taste of fountain drinks. If you find the chlorine taste unpleasant, it can be helpful to leave an uncovered pitcher of water sit overnight. This will allow some of the chlorine to evaporate and could help improve taste during this time.

The burnout process only takes four to five weeks after which we can return to the combined chlorine residual and the excellent tasting water of which we are accustomed. We are extremely fortunate to have such a quality water supply available to us. Quality water helps promote quality life. Much of the rest of the world is not as fortunate as we are in water supply and water quality.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments please know that they are most welcome. Please contact Michael Mix or Scott Flater at the Water Treatment Plant at 223-5160 between 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday.