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## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Is our Community's tap water safe to drink?**

Yes, water produced from our water treatment plants meets and exceeds both Alberta Environment Standards and the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines.

### **Why is my tap water sometimes discoloured?**

Some of the organic and inorganic materials inherent in our source water provide discoloration similar to the action of tea leaves. The water treatment process removes most of this colour, but when the levels in the source water become excessive (spring/autumn) some colour may be carried into the drinking water. You may notice a slight discoloration in the water when filling the bath tub.

### **Why does my water taste and smell like chlorine?**

We add chlorine to disinfect the water and keep it free from harmful organisms. Some conditions, such as spring run-off, affect the quality of the source water and in such times we adjust the water treatment process to ensure the water remains safe to consume. On other occasions, we are required to increase levels of disinfection due to increased bacteriological activity in the source water. At these times you may notice a chlorine taste and smell in your water.

### **Why does my water have a milky or cloudy appearance?**

Air bubbles in water can sometimes cause a milky or cloudy appearance. If the water is allowed to sit, the air will dissipate and the water will clear. These bubbles pose no health risk.

### **What is water hardness?**

Water hardness is caused by the minerals calcium and magnesium in both ground and surface water sources.

### **What are the health issues surrounding water hardness?**

Health Canada has not established drinking water guidelines for hardness because there are no known health effects.

### **How do I know if my water is safe to drink?**

The water in the Fort McKay Membrane Water Treatment Plant is operated and run by the Regional Municipal of Wood Buffalo. Jointly, the RMWB and FMFN regularly tested and meets or exceeds the guidelines set out in the Canadian Drinking Water Standards. Water samples are collected daily from sites throughout the distribution system. These samples are taken to the provincial Public Health Laboratory for testing.

### **I don't like the taste/smell/appearance of my tap water. What's wrong with it?**

Even when water meets and exceeds Canadian Drinking Water standards, you may still object to its taste, smell, or appearance. Common complaints about water aesthetics include temporary cloudiness (typically caused by air bubbles) or chlorine taste (which can be improved by letting the water stand exposed to the air).

### **What if I have a severely compromised immune system?**

Some residents with severely compromised immune systems may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than those without. These individuals should seek advice about drinking water from their health care provider.

### **Is bottled water a better alternative to tap water?**

Bottled water is valuable in emergency situations, and high quality bottled water may be a desirable option for people with weakened immune systems. However, it is not necessarily safer than your tap water and costs much more than tap water on a per litre basis.

Currently, the FMFN provides bottled water to every household in the Community. Effective, April 2016 (TBC) the bottled water service will be discontinued, based on the Independent study conducted by the FMFN. Consumers who choose to purchase bottled water should carefully read the label to understand what they are buying, whether or not it tastes better and what method of treatment is used.

### **What about home water treatment units?**

Members of the Community do not need to treat their drinking water that is supplied by the RMWB to make it safe. A home water treatment unit can improve the water's taste or provide an extra margin of safety for people more vulnerable to the effects of waterborne illness, such as those with weakened immune systems. Members who choose to purchase a home water treatment unit should carefully read its product information to understand what they are buying; the unit will provide a better taste or a certain method of treatment. Be certain to follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and maintenance, especially changing the filter on a regular basis.

### **Where does our water come from?**

Fort McMurray urban service area	Athabasca River
Fort MacKay	Ells River
Anzac	Athabasca River
Janvier	Christina River
Conklin	Christina Lake

**Why are fire hydrants sometimes allowed to flow?**

Fire Hydrants are opened as part of water quality maintenance. Water pipes often need to be flushed to ensure they are free of sediment that can accumulate. Fire hydrants are hooked up to the same system as our drinking water pipes, therefore the flushing is done for safety reasons and to ensure the hydrants operate properly. The municipality should be present during this activity.

**Who develops Drinking Water Guidelines?**

Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality are developed by Health Canada in cooperation with the health and environment ministries of the provinces and territories. Municipal Drinking Water Quality Objectives, containing constituent objectives specific to Saskatchewan, are also established by the Federal Provincial Advisory Committee on Environmental and Occupational Health.

**What is my water pressure?**

The water pressure at the Water Treatment Plant is maintained at 690 kPa (100 psi) throughout the year. However, distribution system pressures vary based on factors such as the contour of the land (the higher you are, the lower your pressure will be), and the system water demands. During the summer months in periods of high demand, system pressures can drop to 275 kPa (40 psi).