

O'Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Company
Serving Portions of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto
P.O. Box 1375
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IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR WATER QUALITY

The most important thing to know is that the water delivered to the properties within the area served by the O'Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Company (O'Connor Water) is safe to drink. The water meets the **primary standards** for safety under the California State regulations administered by the State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Drinking Water (CDDW). O'Connor Water performs regular tests to make sure the water meets primary standards in accordance with a testing plan approved by CDDW.

For more information about O'Connor Water and the water it delivers, please see our website at: <http://www.oconnorwater.org/about-us.html>. If at any time you have any concerns or questions about the water, please call O'Connor Water at 650-321-2723, regardless of the day or time.

Secondary standards govern issues affecting aesthetics (e.g., discoloration) and include the natural minerals that are dissolved from the earth that are in water from wells. **The significant minerals in the well water supplied by O'Connor Water include:**

- **Calcium**, which causes the white deposits (calcium carbonate) in your tea kettle and shower. Water with calcium in it is referred to as "hard water." This hardness does not have any bad health effects. Calcium is an important element in the diet. It is impractical to remove calcium from the source water from the wells, although some owners have installed water softeners.
- **Manganese**, which has no taste or odor. Manganese cannot be seen when dissolved in the water but when it comes out of solution (precipitates out) and separates from the water, it can cause a gray or black deposit that you might see in your toilet tank and may appear as dark color in the water.

You have been receiving "AN IMPORTANT NOTICE REQUIRED BY THE CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF DRINKING WATER" every three months notifying you that the water delivered by O'Connor Water does not meet the secondary standard for manganese.

Since 2010, the average manganese concentration in the water from Well #1 was 62 parts per billion (ppb) and in the water from Well #2 was 141 ppb. The secondary standard for manganese is 50 ppb.

The State of California is requiring that O'Connor Water examine **treatment options** to change the water before it enters the distribution system that delivers the water to the properties within the service area. In 2013, an independent, qualified engineering firm conducted a study in accordance with the State regulations.

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The engineering firm's study gives the following options. These treatment options address only manganese: they do nothing to reduce calcium carbonate (white deposits).

1. Install a **treatment plant** that would **remove** the manganese from the water. This option would require adding chlorine to the water continuously which is not done now. The plant would cost an estimated \$689,000 to build and would require further analysis to finalize a treatment option. The cost to operate this treatment plant would be an additional \$45,000 per year over and above the current O'Connor Water operating costs. Water rates would go up by about 51% to cover these costs. O'Connor Water would have to borrow approximately \$500,000 to build the plant and maintain adequate reserve funds. It is anticipated that water rates for a house would increase from about \$28 to \$42 per month, and rates for a representative apartment house (20 apartments using 130 water units) would increase from about \$233 to \$351. The impact on individual apartment tenants is dependent on the landlord and the City of East Palo Alto's rent ordinance.

2. Install a **sequestration** system that **would not** remove the manganese but would instead add a chemical (polyphosphate) to the water that would keep the manganese in solution in the water. While the manganese could still be in the water delivered to residences, the polyphosphate would prevent it from coming out of solution. The system would cost an estimated \$3000 to install. The cost to operate this sequestration system would be an additional \$35,000 per year over and above the current O'Connor Water operating costs. Water rates would go up about 18% to cover these costs. It is anticipated that water rates for a house would increase from about \$28 to \$33 per month, and rates for a representative apartment house (20 apartments using 130 units) would increase from about \$233 to \$275. The engineering study indicated that with sequestration, the manganese and the polyphosphate would be delivered to the residents' homes and the manganese could possibly come out of solution in water heaters or other areas of plumbing inside the buildings. The impact on individual apartment tenants is dependent on the landlord and the City of East Palo Alto's rent ordinance.

The costs stated above for treatment and sequestration are preliminary and actual costs may vary.

3. **A third option is not to treat the water and continue to distribute the water as it is now**, with more than 50 ppb of manganese (the secondary standard maximum contaminant level or MCL). The water would still be safe to drink, but for this to happen (California Code of Regulations § 64449.2), the water system would have to apply for a waiver of a secondary MCL, conduct an approved survey, and achieve at least a 50% response rate on the survey" (survey is attached).

O'Connor Water has been **holding meetings and conducting surveys** to educate consumers about the water, to answer questions and concerns about the water, and to find out how consumers would like to handle the manganese levels in the water coming from the wells.

Your participation in this process is very important. If you do not respond to this survey, O'Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Company will assume that you are in support of the reduction treatment recommended by the engineering report; the engineering report does not recommend sequestration.