SALTWATER INTRUSION

Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) FAQ

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA READY

Is the water in New Orleans safe to drink?

Yes. The salt water has not yet reached SWBNO's water intakes along the Mississippi River. So, our tap water in New Orleans is safe to drink and use for all purposes. We will inform our customers well in advance of any changes or impacts.

How much longer will the water be safe to drink?

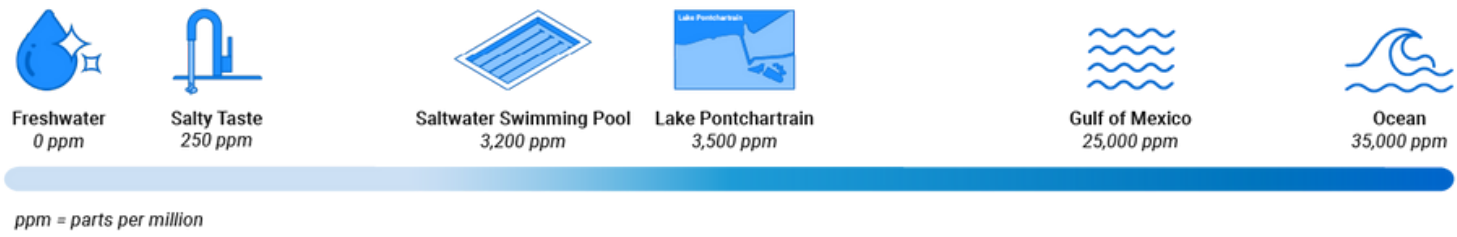
Based on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' most recent projections, we anticipate salt water to begin impacting our water supply shortly before these dates:

- **Algiers:** October 22, 2023
- **Carrollton:** October 28, 2023

NOTE: This timeline is subject to change. Customers can visit the Army Corp's website to track where the saltwater wedge is located: **https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Engineering/Stage-and-Hydrologic-Data/SaltwaterWedge/SaltwaterWedgeNow**

What does salinity mean?

Salinity is the amount of salt dissolved in water. Salt is also known as sodium chloride. Below is a scale showing the salinity of various water sources ranging from fresh water to ocean water. (ppm = parts per million)



Is salinity the only thing SWBNO is monitoring?

No, we are monitoring a broad range of substances to protect public health. For example, when salinity increases, the change can affect water pipe materials like copper, steel, iron and lead. We are working with experts at the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor and manage the potential side effects of higher salinity in the system.

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Can SWBNO remove salt at either water treatment plant?

No, the filtration systems at our water treatment plants cannot remove salt from water because the Mississippi River is fresh water. Ordinarily, there would be no need to remove salt.

Why is saltwater intrusion a health risk?

High levels of salt (above 250 parts per million) in tap water can make it unsafe for drinking and cooking, especially for vulnerable people including but not limited to people with kidney disease or high blood pressure, people on a low-sodium diet, dialysis patients, infants and pregnant women. The health effects of consuming (drinking or cooking with) salt water have been found to be associated with cardiovascular diseases, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Contact your primary care provider regarding your specific health risks.

What steps should I take to protect my infant or young children?

According to LDH (https://ldh.la.gov):
For infants, use bottled spring/purified water to prepare formula if breastfeeding is not an option. Ready-to-feed formula (RTF) or pre-made formula is also an option. When using formula, be sure to follow your child's primary healthcare provider and manufacturer's instructions for preparing and storing formula. Learn more: https://gohsep.la.gov/Portals/3/Docs/Intrusion/Saltwater%20Intrusion%20FAQ%20(Online).pdf

What can I do to reduce or eliminate salt from my drinking water?

You will not be able to reduce or eliminate salt from your tap water at home. Salt is extremely difficult to remove from drinking water and cannot be taken out through boiling or conventional filtration like Brita filters or other common household store-bought water filters.

We will inform customers as soon as possible if and when New Orleans water becomes impacted by salt water. In partnership with city and state agencies, we will provide guidance for customers and their drinking water consumption.

How often is SWBNO measuring the amount of salt in its drinking water?

Salt is also known as sodium chloride. Every day we measure chloride at our river intakes and in our tap water in Algiers and on the Eastbank. Measuring chloride allows us to estimate the salinity levels in the water.

At what level is it no longer safe to drink or cook with our water?

In partnership with EPA, we will issue an advisory if chloride levels reach 250 parts per million.

However, if you notice an unusual taste, odor, or appearance in your tap water, contact SWBNO at (504) 52-WATER.

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Will the salt water increase contaminants in our water supply? How can I protect myself?

Introducing salt water to our system could undermine our current corrosion prevention methods. This could cause substances like iron and lead from older pipes in our water system to dissolve into the treated water.

We need more data to understand the impacts higher salt levels may have. We are working with top experts at LDH and EPA to prepare a corrosion sampling plan to increase our testing for lead and many other substances. We will work with our partners to address impacts swiftly with a full range of resources.

If the amount of chloride in our drinking water reaches 250 parts per million, alternate sources of drinking water and cooking water will be necessary. The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness will support SWBNO and the City of New Orleans in providing drinking water if needed. If you are concerned about your water, contact (504) 52-WATER.

You can also visit the following resources to learn how to limit exposure to corroded metals in your drinking water.

- **EPA Infographic about Lead in Drinking Water**: https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-08/documents/epa_lead_in_drinking_water_final_8.21.17.pdf#:~:text=Use%20only%20cold%20water%20for%20drinking%2C%20cooking%20and,know%20when%20it%E2%80%99s%20time%20to%20replace%20the%20filter.
- **EPA:** https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources/water.htm
- **SWBNO's Lead Awareness webpage:** https://www.swbno.org/DrinkingWater/LeadAwareness

Should I conserve water?

Conservation practices are always a good idea and become even more important if and when salt water arrives. As always, we will continue to keep our customers informed well in advance of any proposed changes to their water use. Visit the CDC's website for guidance on how to safely store water: https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/creating-storing-emergency-water-supply.html

Can I still wash my hands? Shower? Wash dishes?

Throughout the duration of the event, we will continue to deliver water to our customers for all wastewater purposes, including showering, washing dishes, washing clothes, flushing toilets, fire suppression, etc. If salinity levels become hazardous for these purposes, we'll inform our customers.

Will alternate water sources be provided if the water is deemed unsafe to drink?

We are working with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, the City of New Orleans and other partners to ensure we have the resources to provide safe drinking water to our customers if and when needed.

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Can my pet drink salt water?

No. Salt water is not appropriate for pets to drink. Please ensure you are only providing bottled water or some other fresh water source for pets.

Will the salt water affect SWBNO's infrastructure, such as the treatment plants or the treatment process?

We are actively assessing a wide range of variables and evaluating our options to address saltwater in the water treatment process and water system. Chloride levels are being monitored daily and trends are being monitored in our neighboring communities downstream. SWBNO will begin posting daily chloride levels for the public and additional testing results as they become available.

SWBNO uses a common anti-corrosion technique where lime (calcium hydroxide) is added to raise the pH level of the drinking water. This reduces the potential of lead getting into drinking water from lead service lines.

Can the salt water damage my pipes? If so, what should I do to prevent this?

In general, high salinity levels in water can corrode metal, especially ferrous metals such as iron and steel. Galvanic corrosion of lead in contact with other metals at connection points may also occur. The impacts will depend on several factors including the level of salinity and the length of time saltwater remains in the system if it enters. Any speculation about impacts is premature, but we are working diligently with top experts at LDH and EPA to prepare to increase our frequency of lead testing and address impacts swiftly with a full range of resources.