



Water Transition Coming Soon

Important Information to Help Residents and Businesses Prepare

In late summer 2023 (currently estimated early September), Waukesha will transition from its current water source to Lake Michigan water. As we get closer to the transition date, we would like to make sure residents, businesses and other Waukesha Water Utility customers know what you need to do *before* the transition takes place, while also providing you with information on what you might experience *during* the transition. **(Businesses and landlords – please share this important information with your personnel and tenants.)**

Things You May Need to Do **BEFORE** the Transition

When Waukesha transitions from its current groundwater supply to 100% Lake Michigan water from Milwaukee, there will be differences in the water characteristics and in the treatment methods. **(If you have a business that treats water for processes or products, now is the time to consult with your water treatment professionals to plan for any needed adjustments.)**

One permanent difference is a change in the disinfection process from chlorine (currently used by Waukesha) to **chloramines** (used by Milwaukee and the 860,000 people it serves). Both are commonly used to ensure public health protection and the change should be unnoticeable. However, the switch to chloramine may affect some health treatments, such as kidney dialysis. Also, chloramines, like chlorine, can be harmful to fish, reptiles and amphibians, if you are not prepared, and may require different treatment. Below is information on how customers with dialysis and pet aquariums need to prepare.

- Kidney Dialysis
Kidney dialysis patients should contact their physician or local kidney dialysis center, *before* the water transition begins, for guidance on modifications to dialysis machines and procedures. Let your medical provider know that Waukesha will be getting a new water supply and modifications may be needed.
- Fish, Reptiles, & Amphibians
Owners of fish, reptiles, and amphibians should consult local pet stores, *before* the transition begins, about required changes in water treatment. Area pet stores should be familiar with precautions (inexpensive water treatment or specified carbon filters) to remove chloramines in the new water supply. Let your pet store know that your new water supply will be from Milwaukee, which currently supplies many area communities, and that you will need treatment to remove the chloramines.

What You May Experience **DURING** the Transition

The entire transition could take as long as one month, as Lake Michigan water enters the supply system. However, impacts at individual locations will likely be noticeable for no more than a few days, if they are noticeable at all. Information on how to stay up to date on timing and other details of the transition are included below.

During the transition, most differences will be unnoticeable, but utility customers could experience **temporary** changes such as having a **chlorine-like smell or taste**. This will be due to increased chlorine levels during the transition to ensure a safe drinking water supply. Once the transition is complete, those disinfectant levels will be similar to the level of the current water supply. **The water will be safe to drink during and after the transition.**

Water discoloration could also occur for a short period of time due to the normal buildup of sediment in the pipes, similar to what happens during our annual pipe flushing. Discolored water is aesthetically unappealing but does not pose a human health issue. However, you should **remove certain water filters** (like filters in refrigerators, on kitchen sinks, in reverse osmosis systems, etc.) during the transition. Also, **avoid activities like laundering or making ice** until the water is clear. (**Laundromats, hospitals, nursing homes, hotels, restaurants, and landlords**, etc. may want to notify their staff members and tenants to avoid laundering and making ice, and to remove filters, during the transition.)

If you end up with color in your clothes, **do not put them in the dryer** because that can set the stain. To remove the color, you can use products like Red-B-Gone or Iron Out, from local hardware stores or online. The utility will have limited supplies of this product too. **Flushing your system's water pipes with cold water is typically the best way to resolve any problems with discolored water** and will help the water run clear again. Any discoloration will be temporary, and the water will continue to meet water quality regulations.

Other permanent changes in water characteristics may include pH, mineral content, alkalinity and hardness.

Some people will also notice a slight change in the taste, due to differences in mineral content in the Milwaukee water, which is currently used by over 860,000 people in 16 other nearby communities.

Lake Michigan water is 60% softer than our current water supply, which will be another permanent benefit. We recommend that you **bypass your water softener for a month or two once the transition is complete** to determine your satisfaction with unsoftened water. Most Lake Michigan water users don't use water softeners. If you decide you would like to continue to use your softener, then you must have your water softener optimized for the new, softer water supply. This means having an approved optimizer adjust the settings for hardness, salt dosage and reserve capacity. For more information on water softeners or softener optimization, visit www.waukesha-wi.gov/watersoftener or call the Clean Water Plant at (262) 524-3628.

Once the transition is complete, Waukesha's water source will be 100% Lake Michigan water. There will be no blending of Waukesha's current groundwater supply with the Lake Michigan supply. However, we will maintain some groundwater wells to be used only in an emergency situation.

Stay Up to Date

Delivery of high-quality, reliable water to customers is and will continue to be the Waukesha Water Utility's top priority. The utility has undertaken extensive analysis to ensure that the introduction of this new supply will be as simple as possible for customers. The switch to Lake Michigan water benefits all businesses and residents by ensuring a safe and reliable water supply for the long term. However, we understand there may be temporary inconveniences and we appreciate your patience and understanding.

If you have any questions, please visit www.waukesha-water.com for a link to extensive information about the switch, including a video regarding the transition, Frequently Asked Questions, and updates on timing of the transition. Or contact the utility at (262) 521-5272.