

SALTWATER INTRUSION | FAQ

Due to low water levels in the lower Mississippi River, saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico is currently intruding upstream. This phenomenon is known as saltwater intrusion.

Saltwater intrusion can affect local water supplies because many public drinking water systems in south Louisiana rely on fresh water from the Mississippi River. Plaquemines Parish has been impacted by saltwater intrusion since June 2023. Additional parishes that may be affected include Orleans, St. Bernard and Jefferson.

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), along with regional, state and federal partners, is actively monitoring this situation and conducting water quality testing and

analysis to provide regular updates to the general public and healthcare providers about impacts to water systems and necessary precautions.

The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) has established the website [Emergency.la.gov](https://www.emergency.la.gov) where accurate information about the saltwater intrusion can be found. Please monitor information provided by local, state and federal authorities, including LDH, GOHSEP and the Army Corps of Engineers.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR WATER

How can I test my water if it tastes or looks different?

Water systems are conducting increased water monitoring and will issue drinking water advisories about their system's water quality.

How do I know whether my drinking water contains salt?

Local and state authorities will notify residents when their water is affected.

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

Sodium cannot be easily removed from drinking water and cannot be removed through boiling or conventional filtration like Brita filters or other common household store-bought water filters. Once your water system is affected, it is recommended to use bottled water or some other freshwater source.

How do I determine what water system supplies water to my home?

Please check your water bill to identify your water system and its contact information.

HEALTH + SAFETY

»» Why is saltwater intrusion a health risk?

Saltwater can make drinking water unsafe, 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 drinking saltwater 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?

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.

»» 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.

PLUMBING + APPLIANCE IMPACT

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

Over time, high levels of saltwater can cause damage to plumbing, appliances, cooling systems that use water, and water heaters. The best source of information for specific equipment under these conditions is the manufacturer, vendor and/or service provider.

»» Can my business or property use an emergency well? If so, what do I need to know?

Yes. See this website for more information about private wells: <https://ldh.la.gov/subhome/56>

»» What effect will the salinity have on the infrastructure and chilled water cooling systems for commercial and industrial facilities?

The best source of information is the manufacturer, vendor and/or service provider.