Town of Salisbury
Department of Public Works
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Common Water Issues:

Low Water Pressure:

Some reasons for low water pressure:

Location in a higher elevation will result in lower water pressure. The difference in elevation between you and the water tanks on Batt Hill or North End Blvd will resolve to be your water pressure.

Another issue may be that the water main supplying the water to your area could be an older unlined pipe that is limiting the volume. It could also be your individual water service blocking the flow.

Finally; water main breaks, fires and hydrant flushing will contribute to low water pressure

Please note:

1. There is not much you can do about elevation, except for the installation of booster stations.
2. Replacing water mains are an ongoing program, but budgets drive the speed of the rehabilitation of the system. Fixing individual services can be performed when low water pressures become extreme. This may be the towns or the resident's responsibility depending on the location.
3. This problem is usually temporary and will remedy itself over time.

Rusty Water:

Chances are at one time or another, a resident of Salisbury has experienced to some degree, the occurrence of rusty water. Typically the occurrence is short lived. Rust or ferric oxide is listed as a secondary drinking water standard and is not a health concern (though it is undesirable at higher concentrations).

Tuberculation of pipes: Tuberculation is the buildup of deposits of iron due to corrosion. Previous to 1948, most water mains were constructed of cast iron and were prone to corrosion. Tubercles slowly form inside these pipes, restricting flow and causing the intermittent loosening of deposits of iron. This directly results in rusty water. Salisbury has some portions of town that are operated on unlined cast, however, replacement of these troublesome water mains are an ongoing project.

Below is a list of probable causes of rusty water:

- Water main break: occasionally weakened, old water mains will split, crack, or fragment. The sudden change of flow and direction of water will loosen tubercle.
- Hydrant flushing: performed twice a year to remove sediment in the distribution system will cause temporary discoloration of the water in the local area of flushing.
- Fires: usage of hydrants for fire protection will also cause rusty water, similar to hydrant flushing.

Pink or orange discoloration of fixtures:

Occasionally a call will be received describing a type of stain in their sink, toilet or bathtub that has an orange or pink hue. The water industry has done research on this phenomenon and you can read one of the articles here. The issue does not stem from the water system, but when certain conditions exist at the homeowner's location. Constant wet areas usually will cause this problem and keeping them dry will most likely prevent recurrences.

Chlorine odor:

Chlorine odor is one of the most commented on criticisms of the water. Taste and smell are a subjective analysis with many levels of objection. Even a small amount of chlorine residual will be intolerant to some. The extent of chlorine left after reacting with the water is termed "chlorine residual". Chlorine residual is the portion that the resident smells or tastes.

The main purpose for the addition of chlorine is for disinfection. Enough chlorine must be added to the water to disinfect and leave a residual to prevent any other bacterial occurrence. Unfortunately for the resident, depending on the location; may have an undesirable level of chlorine. The trade off for compromising aesthetics is safety. Back in the mid 1800's it was discovered that by adding a disinfectant like chlorine could control waterborne diseases.

If the taste and odor of chlorine are disagreeable, a solution could be to fill a pitcher and leave it the refrigerator. Chlorine will dissipate over time, hopefully making the water more appealing.

Sulfur odor

Sulfur or "rotten egg' odor is a complaint that appears periodically. There are a couple of causes that were investigated to be the culprit:

Odors that usually are located around bathroom sinks were actually found to be originating from the drain. What frequently happens is that hair and other indiscriminate materials clog the drain, thus restricting the flow. The trapped material will decompose over time and when the water is turned on, a sulfur like smell will waft up. To remedy this, cleaning out the drain pipe to remove the obstruction is the best solution. If you feel uncomfortable about performing this, you should have a plumber do it. Also, a lesser fix is to pour a bleach solution down the drain. Follow the products instructions closely. Bleach can be dangerous if not used properly.

If the sulfur odor seems to come primarily from the hot water faucet and to a lesser degree from the cold side; than the issue may be hydrogen sulfide formation. A couple of factors must exist first for this to happen:

- Periods of infrequent use of the hot water.
- Magnesium anodes in hot water tank.

What typically happens, is that the sulfate which exists in the water reacts with the magnesium anodes in the hot water tank; forming hydrogen sulfide (rotten egg smell). The longer the water sits in the hot water tank; the more hydrogen sulfide is formed. First, where did the sulfate come from? Sulfate occurs naturally in in the source water, but the levels are elevated due to the use of Aluminum Sulfate in the water treatment process. Second, what is a magnesium anode? In most hot water heaters; there are sacrificial rods (anodes), their purpose is to prevent corrosion of the tank. The anodes are replaceable and manufacturers are switching to different materials other than magnesium. If the above symptoms match your situation; a call to the manufacturer of your hot water tank to confirm that magnesium anodes are installed. If they are, then a plumber can replace them; this will usually remedy the problem.

Hydrogen Sulfide is not a health concern; except for high levels, which are not normally inherent in drinking water systems.

The Town of Salisbury does not fluoridate water.