



Water Treatment Division 336-727-8000 cityofws.org/utilities

Why does my water smell like rotten eggs?

Rotten egg or sulfurous odors in the drinking water are typically caused by organic material degrading in the P-trap of the sink drain, sewer gases escaping from the sink drain, or stagnant water in the hot water tank.

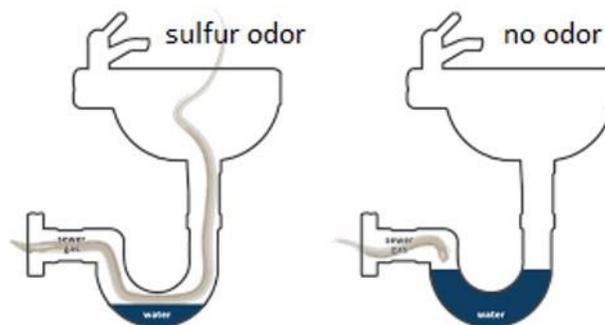
Typical Sources

Organics degrading in the P-trap

When you stand over the sink and turn it on, air comes out of the drain and the common assumption is that the odor is coming from the drinking water. However, this may not be the case. A good test is to fill a glass with water and remove it from the sink area to smell it. That way you can determine whether the odor is in fact coming from the water or the drain. Another test is to pour bleach down the drain. If it temporarily improves the odor then organics could be degrading in the P-trap of the sink drain. Alternatively, a drain cleaner may help dissolve the organic material.

Sewer gases escaping from the sink drain

The P-trap in the sink drain is designed to allow water to remain in it, which provides a barrier against sewer gases escaping up through the sink drain. If a sink is not used frequently, the water in the P-trap may evaporate and no longer stop gases from escaping. If this is a frequent problem, there could be a leak in the drain allowing it to become dry. Another possibility is that vents in your plumbing system designed for venting sewer gases could be clogged or not functioning properly. Again, filling a glass with water and removing it from the sink area for a smell test will help you determine whether the odor is coming from the water or the drain.



Stagnant water in the hot water tank

If the odor is detected in your hot water but not the cold water, flushing the hot water heater should resolve this problem.

Questions? Please call City Link 311 or 336-727-8000.