Why does New Jersey American Water use chloramine for the disinfection process?

To comply with new, stringent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, New Jersey American Water needed to transition the water treatment disinfection practice at several of its facilities from chlorine to chloramine. We made the change to reduce the levels of disinfection byproducts that EPA has found to have known health risks. These byproducts are potentially harmful contaminants that form when chlorine reacts with organic compounds naturally present in our surface water sources of supply during the normal water purification process.

Compared to chlorine, chloramine produces substantially lower concentrations of the disinfection byproducts that the EPA regulates in drinking water. The new federal regulations are in effect, and we took a proactive approach to ensure that our water meets all public health standards.

Is chloramination safe?

For nearly 90 years, water systems across the United States and Canada have used chloramine without any ill effects. Every day, one in five Americans receive drinking water treated with chloramine, including residents in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Boston, Dallas, Indianapolis, Denver and Miami. Please note that two groups of customers need to take special precautions: kidney dialysis patients and fish owners. For more information, visit www.NJChloramineFacts.com. In addition, New Jersey American Water brings almost 30 years of experience using chloramine to treat water in its Raritan System, which serves customers in Mercer, Somerset, Middlesex and Union Counties.

Where does New Jersey American Water use chloramines to disinfect the water?

New Jersey American Water brings almost 30 years of experience using chloramine to treat water in its Raritan System, which serves customers in Mercer, Somerset, Middlesex and Union Counties.

As a result of the new more stringent drinking water standards, New Jersey American Water will be changing the way our drinking water is treated for our customers in Coastal North System beginning the week of June 4, 2012. This change impacts customers in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, EXCEPT for customers in Howell Township, Lakewood, Freehold Township and Farmingdale (Note: there are a handful of customers who will receive chloraminated water in Farmingdale and those customers have been notified directly). All impacted customers were mailed a notice, which is also available online at www.NJChloramineFacts.com.

How will the transition to chloramines affect our drinking water?

People use chloraminated water in all the same ways for drinking, bathing, cooking, cleaning and watering lawns and gardens. The only change that customers might notice is a reduced taste and odor of chlorine. If you prefer, products are available that reduce or remove chloramine, such as home treatment systems and water filters, which often contain certifications describing their effectiveness. We recommend that you visit the National Sanitation Foundation’s (NSF) Web site, where NSF provides information on in-home filters that remove chloramine and chlorine. Please note that two groups of customers need to take special precautions: kidney dialysis patients and fish owners.

What precautions do kidney dialysis patients need to take?

In the dialysis process, water comes in direct contact with the bloodstream. Just like chlorine, the presence of chloramine in dialysis water would be harmful and it must be removed. Dialysis systems already pre-treat their source water to remove chlorine and many of the pre-treatment systems will also remove chloramines. To be certain that modifications aren’t necessary to remove chloramines, dialysis patients should consult with their dialysis provider or health care practitioner. Consult your physician if you have any questions.
Can dialysis patients drink chloraminated water?
Yes. Chloraminated water can be consumed because the digestive process neutralizes the chloramine before it reaches the bloodstream. Kidney dialysis patients can drink, cook and bathe in water treated with chloramine. Please consult your physician if you have any questions. For more information, customers can also visit the EPA’s Chloramines Q and As.

Should I be concerned about washing open wounds with chloraminated water?
No. Water disinfected with chloramine is no different than using chlorinated water to cleanse a wound. Virtually no water comes into direct contact with the bloodstream, so there is no harm.

How are fish affected by chloramines and what precautions should fish owners take?
Like chlorine, chloramines are toxic at low levels and must be removed from the water to be used for aquatic life, because they can come into direct contact with their bloodstream. Therefore, chloramines should be removed from water used in aquariums, fish tanks and ponds. Individuals or businesses that keep fish or other animals in tanks, aquariums, or ponds should ask a pet supply company about removing chloramines. Customers who use drinking water for aquaculture purposes (growing plants in water tanks or ponds) should get expert advice regarding the need and procedures to neutralize or remove chloramines. Also, restaurants and grocery stores with lobster tanks must take special precautions to treat the water.

Does chloramine increase the chance of lead poisoning due to leaching from household plumbing?
No. Proper corrosion control is always the key to reducing the risk of lead leaching, and New Jersey American Water has extensive experience in this field. In fact, when the Washington D.C. water system had issues with lead and a lack of proper corrosion control with chlorine – before it made the transition to chloramine, the EPA called our parent company, American Water, to help resolve the issue. Our environmental experts assisted Washington D.C. officials in developing the solution – a phosphate-based corrosion inhibitor. New Jersey American Water practices corrosion control at all of its water treatment facilities, and is in compliance at all systems with the Federal and State Lead and Copper regulation.

Is chloraminated water safe for my pets?
Chloramine is safe for all mammals – including dogs and cats – as well as birds and most reptiles. Please consult your veterinarian or local pet store for more information.

Will chlorination affect businesses?
Businesses and other establishments that use municipal drinking water for commercial processes that require carefully controlled water characteristics should get advice from equipment manufacturers or other suppliers regarding any changes that may be needed. These types of businesses may include laboratories, microchip manufacturers, biotech companies, soft drink bottlers, photography labs and restaurants or seafood suppliers with fish tanks.

Will chloramine adversely affect my swimming pool?
You should continue to treat your pool according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. Test kits available at your local pool supply store can be used to measure the disinfectant concentration in the pool water. Contact your local pool supply store for additional details.

When it comes to gardening, will chloraminated water harm ornamental plants, vegetables, trees or shrubs?
No. The low levels of disinfectant in the water should not have any effect on plant life. The bacteria that contribute to plant growth live within the soil and are generally protected from chloramine concentrations by the soil layer. Soil will reduce or remove the disinfectant, thereby reducing its levels in the water that reach the plants.

Where can I obtain more information
Be sure to get the facts about chloramine from trusted, credible sources, such as the EPA. For links to these organizations’ information about chloramine and more, visit us online at www.NJChloramineFacts.com or contact our Customer Service Center at 1-800-652-6987.