

Water Conditioner Information

About Water Softeners

Dear Members,

In what is becoming an annual event, many of you have received notification of a company offering to test your water. This is a sales promotion aimed at convincing people to buy overpriced and often unnecessary treatment systems. We offer this page in response to some of the questions asked by our members.



Who are the people that send these letters? They are companies or salespeople who only want to sell expensive treatment systems to you. They will try to scare, mislead, promise, and convince you any way they can to make the sale. I have had demonstrations in my home of these units and have an idea of how they portray this information. Many times they have absolutely no qualifications to test your water. In some cases, they also change their company name often to confuse their identity in case you have already been contacted or have purchased from them in the past. Please feel free to check the Florida Department of Corporations to find this out for yourself. The systems they offer can cost as much as \$3,500.00 or more depending on how much they think you will spend when in fact you can purchase a similar system that will soften your water from Sears, Home Depot, or Lowe's, to name a few of the local home improvement centers, for around \$500.00. Not all companies are this way and some have built a very good reputation concerning their equipment and the service they provide. Just be wary of any fantastic claims and accusations made and research the company before you make a purchase. Education is always your best defense in these situations and if a salesperson tries to rush you into a decision, be very suspicious.

What Are Water Conditioners / Softeners? Water conditioners and softeners for consumers address two main problems in water, Iron (Fe) and Hardness. The Iron content for our untreated water averages 0.6 parts per million (PPM) which is above the MCL of 0.3 PPM. Rapid sand filtration and aeration is used at our facility to remove Iron. Very little, if any, Iron escapes this process so a conditioner or filter for Iron is not really necessary. Hardness is usually corrected by using a device called a Water Softener. Most softeners for homes use Sodium Chloride (NaCl) or Potassium Chloride (KCl) which are both metallic salts. When water passes over a salt bed, Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg) ions are replaced with Sodium (Na) or Potassium (K) ions thereby reducing the hardness of the water. Salt has to be added continuously to "recharge" these units.

What is Hardness? Most Hardness in water is caused by Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg) ions in the water. 17.1 mg/l is equal to 1 grain/gal. Hardness is broken down into scales as follows: 0-75 mg/l Soft, 75-150 mg/l Moderate, 150-250 mg/l Hard, and over 250 mg/L is considered Very Hard. Ideal water hardness is probably somewhere around 90 mg/l. Our water's hardness averages approximately 195 mg/l or 11.4 grains. Our water is considered Hard. Hardness in water can be a good thing as it prevents the water from becoming corrosive. Sometimes hardness, in the form of calcium, is even added to water as a Corrosion Inhibitor and to adjust the pH level of water to a safe drinking level. Although hardness does cause some scale formation and water spots, it is safe to consume.

Do you need a water softener or conditioner? Floral City Water does not treat for hardness and if your preference is to have soft water, then you will need to buy a softener. Many people prefer water that is low in hardness because it does not spot dishes, you use less detergent, and your ice cubes have clear centers among other reasons. The level of Sodium in the water will increase when using a conditioner that uses regular salt. People monitoring your sodium level need to keep this in mind or use Potassium Chloride (KCl), which is typically more expensive, instead of Sodium Chloride (NaCl). The water also will be more corrosive, and gives a slick feeling after washing. The cost of a softener is usually high plus the continual maintenance and the purchase of salt or other chemicals adds to the cost. If this cost is justified to you for the benefits received, then you may want to consider a unit. The choice is yours. Just do not buy a softener because you think it will make your water safer. It will not.

Is the water from Floral City Water Association safe to drink? Yes. At Floral City Water Association, our primary concern is the safety of our drinking water. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulates all community water systems. With these rules we monitor physical, biological, chemical, and radiological characteristics of the water we supply you. Chlorine residual, pH, and Iron are tested at four separate locations daily, Alkalinity, Calcium Hardness, Phosphate, Turbidity, and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) are tested every two weeks at each of our facilities, Bacteriological samples are taken from thirteen rotated sites throughout our distribution system twice each month, and Nitrate and Nitrite samples are taken once a year. In addition to these tests, over 85 other chemical and physical characteristics covering a wide variety of manmade and naturally occurring contaminants, such as pesticides, petroleum byproducts, radiological sources, and herbicides, are measured every three years. In some cases, we measure for contaminants in parts per billion, meaning to a point equal to one second in 32 years. The results of this testing is submitted to DEP. If the guidelines set by Congress and the DEP are violated or we exceed any Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) deemed to be a health risk, we are required by law to notify each and every customer on our system. With the exception of Trihalomethanes, which we are currently trying to resolve, we have not exceeded the MCL's set by DEP. Additionally, each year a Consumer Confidence Report is issued to all our members listing all constituents that were found in our water. All public water utilities are required to produce and deliver this report annually.

Who Operates Our Water Plants? We are required to maintain a person, state licensed by DEP, to operate and oversee our water treatment facilities. Floral City Water has one state licensed operator, three licensed distribution technicians, one certified backflow technician, and a certified backflow repair technician. Our operator holds a Class A Water License from the state of Florida, which is the highest level available. Continuing education is also important and required to keep current on the issues of water treatment, therefore seminars and training sessions are attended by all employees to ensure that we provide the best quality drinking water to you at all times.

Questions to ask before you purchase a treatment system:

1. As with any expensive purchase, have you researched the information given to you, to check its accuracy and is the unit more or less than you really need??
2. Are you are getting the best product for the amount of money you spend? Check the National Sanitation Foundation website at National Sanitation Federation for more information or price a unit from a home improvement center or hardware store.
3. Have you shopped around for similar products?

4. Do you completely understand the equipment and what the maintenance of that product involves?
5. Are you being rushed into an uninformed purchase through pressure or scare tactics?
6. If water is tested in your home, what are the qualifications of the person or persons testing the water and can they produce documentation?
7. Are you buying a product based on information stating your water is not safe to consume? (If a salesperson tells you this, ask them to put that in writing on their letterhead and forward a copy to our office.)
8. Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

Please keep in mind, Floral City Water Association has nothing to gain or lose from your purchase of a water conditioner. This information is only provided as a service to our members in an effort to help answer questions many have asked our office. We have seen a few of our members have been taken advantage of by some unscrupulous salespersons and wish to educate our members so they can make a more informed decision. We hope we have been able to do this with this page.

If you have any questions concerning your water or would like additional information not provided in this letter please feel free to contact our office and we will be glad to assist you.

**Thank you,
Floral City Water Association, Inc.**