



# TAP WATER SHEEN

MARCH 2024

## What should I do if my tap water has a sheen?

If you notice a sheen, stir the water. If the oily film breaks into smaller sections, the sheen is likely due to natural causes (e.g., bacteria in water). Smell the water. If you notice a rotten egg smell, the cause of the sheen is likely due to sulfur bacteria. If after stirring the water, the oily film quickly forms back together into one uniform layer, the sheen may be caused by petroleum. If this occurs, stop consuming the water immediately and contact the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) Emergency Operations Center at **808-449-1979**. (Refer to the Navy Water Quality Action Team Fact Sheet on page 8).

While it is unlikely that the sheen or odor is from JP-5 fuel (based on the thousands of drinking water samples that have been collected at JBPHH), the Navy will respond and test.

## My tap water has a sheen. Is it safe to drink?

The JBPHH drinking water (i.e., tap water) continues to meet all state and federal safe drinking water standards and is safe to drink and use for all purposes. After the JP-5 release in November 2021, the JBPHH drinking water distribution system was systematically flushed with clean water from the Waiawa Shaft to remove drinking water impacted by JP-5 from the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility.

During and after the system flushing, thousands of drinking water samples were collected and tested to ensure drinking water is safe for human consumption. In March 2022, the Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) amended health advisories for zones within the JBPHH drinking water system and determined that drinking water was safe for residents to consume.

Over 8,000 drinking water samples have been collected and tested during the two-year Long-Term Monitoring Plan, which began March 2022 and will end March 2024, to ensure that the JBPHH drinking water distribution system consistently meets all federal and state safe drinking water standards. After March 2024, the Navy will continue monitoring drinking water with its Extended Drinking Water Monitoring program.



If you have any concerns regarding the water quality at your home, immediately contact the JBPHH Emergency Operations Center at **808-449-1979 (open 24/7)**.



### NATURAL SHEEN ON TEA

Sheen in tap water does not always mean there is cause for concern. Sheen can be from natural causes that pose no threat to human health.

## What can cause a sheen in tap water?

A sheen, or an oily film forming on the surface of drinking water, is typically due to organic impurities (e.g., bacteria) naturally present in the water and can also be caused by oils present in the foods and drinks you consume, such as coffee, and plastic containers.

In rare instances, sheen on drinking water can be due to contamination (e.g., a petroleum spill). When high concentrations of minerals (such as iron and sulfur) are present in groundwater, higher amounts of certain bacteria (i.e., those that use iron or sulfate for energy “food” or respiration “breathing”) may also be in the water. Sheen in tap water may also be present if water in your home has been stagnant for an extended period of time. This can provide an opportunity for bacteria to grow because the amount of disinfectant (e.g., chlorine) in tap water, that is typically used to prevent bacterial growth, decreases over time.

Although sulfur bacteria can cause an unsightly sheen and unpleasant odor in drinking water, the bacteria are not harmful to human health.

## Additional Information for Sheen on Water

### Iron and Manganese Bacteria in Private Well Water

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/environmental\\_health/private\\_wells/pdf/IronManganeseBacteria2pdf.pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/environmental_health/private_wells/pdf/IronManganeseBacteria2pdf.pdf?la=en)

### Iron Bacteria Problems in Wells

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/DrinkingWater/Publications/DG004.pdf>

### Sulfur Bacteria Problems in Wells

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/DrinkingWater/Publications/DG005.pdf>

### Hydrogen Sulfide and Sulfur Bacteria in Well Water

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/hydrosulfide.pdf>

### Identifying Water Sheens

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/spills-and-environmental-emergencies/docs/materials/watersheen\\_facts\\_identifying\\_sheen.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/spills-and-environmental-emergencies/docs/materials/watersheen_facts_identifying_sheen.pdf)



## RESOURCES

For more information, please visit [jbphh-safewaters.org](http://jbphh-safewaters.org).

To request water samples, contact the JBPHH Emergency Operations Center at any of the following numbers:

808-449-1979

808-448-3262

808-448-2557

808-448-2570

808-448-2583

