



Department of Health

The Do Not Drink advisory for the Village of New Paltz Water System has been lifted. The Village issued this advisory out of an abundance of caution due to odor complaints. Residents are being asked to flush their plumbing by following the advice at www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2020/docs/flushing_factsheet.pdf before using their water for drinking and food preparation.

This information addresses health questions about these odors.

Why could people smell odors associated with petroleum compounds, but laboratory tests did not detect them in drinking water?

Petroleum compounds such as fuel oil are made up of hundreds of chemicals. The water samples collected from New Paltz's water source, treatment plant, and throughout the distribution system were analyzed for organic compounds typically found in petroleum using methods designed for drinking water. None of these compounds were detected in the water samples collected on Thursday, February 13. However, some people can smell petroleum compounds at levels lower than can be quantified by even the most sensitive laboratory instruments, so it is not uncommon to detect a smell with no measured levels from the lab.

I heard that laboratory tests were "non-detect." What does this mean?

Non-detect, or values preceded by the symbol (<), means the level of the contaminant was less than the lowest level that a laboratory can measure for that chemical.

Could people have been exposed to petroleum compounds before odor complaints were reported?

It is unlikely that people were exposed to petroleum compounds if they didn't smell them in the water, although some people are more sensitive to these odors than others.

What steps should people take before using their water for drinking and preparing food?

People should take steps to flush their indoor plumbing and, if needed, clean any in-home water filtration systems by following the advice at www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2020/docs/flushing_factsheet.pdf.

Could the petroleum compounds that were in the water compromise people's septic systems?

No, the levels of petroleum-related chemicals were very low and would not affect private septic systems.

What are health effects from exposure to petroleum compounds at these low levels?

If you drank water that had odors, it may have contained a small amount of petroleum compounds that was diluted by a larger volume of water. Such an exposure would likely have been short term (e.g., lasting from hours to a day) because a person is unlikely to continue to drink water with odors. These low-level exposures do not typically result in long-term health effects. Any health symptoms resulting from such short-term exposures to low levels of

petroleum compounds would resolve once the exposure has stopped. If you have symptoms that you believe are the result of drinking the water, we recommend that you consider following up with your health care provider.

Who should I contact with additional concerns?

For questions and concerns contact the NYS Department of Health Metropolitan Regional Office
(845) 794-2045