

Water Quality FAQs

(Content is time sensitive and will be updated if the situation changes.)

Q. Is Fort Collins water ok to drink?

A. Yes. Fort Collins' drinking water quality has not been affected by recent fires. The real effects on raw water quality from a fire occur during and after the first few rainfall events located in the burn area. However, the Fort Collins Utilities' water treatment processes are flexible to handle a variety of scenarios.

Q. How does the City of Fort Collins know the water is safe?

A. Fort Collins Utilities' water quality experts continuously monitor incoming water quality to prevent potential contaminants from entering the system. The Water Treatment Facility's state-of-the-art treatment process removes contaminants from raw water coming from the Poudre River or Horsetooth Reservoir. The water is not released for drinking, bathing or household cleaning (dishes, clothes, etc.) until it is treated and meets all state and federal drinking water regulations.

Q. How much of our drinking water supply is in the High Park Fire area?

A. At this time, only 3 percent of the High Park Fire affects the Horsetooth Reservoir watershed, the region that drains into Horsetooth. Currently, the City is drawing raw water from the reservoir and not from the Poudre River.

Q. Why isn't the City using water from the Poudre River?

A. Access is restricted to the Poudre Canyon on Hwy 14 due to the active High Park Fire, which led to the decision to shut down the raw water intake on the Poudre River.

Q. Is the Poudre River contaminated by the High Park Fire?

A. At this time, the river is running clear. Fort Collins Utilities stopped taking water from the Poudre River after rainwater running off the earlier Hewlett Fire burn area temporarily turned the river black.

Q. What does rainfall have to do with water quality?

A. Rainfall can cause large amounts of sediment to run off burned slopes and into the river, which could increase total organic carbon (TOC) and sediment levels to rise in raw water. TOC comes from decaying or burnt natural organic matter, such as soil, decaying vegetation, and animal and human waste.

Q. What will Fort Collins Utilities do to keep drinking water clean?

A. Utilities is taking steps to ensure its drinking water quality remains at the expected high level. Utilities will continue to monitor the effects of the fire, treat raw water and take all additional precautions as needed. Utilities is collaborating with other water users, Colorado State University and Northern Water to ensure that water is treated to the expected high quality.

Q. If I use more water to protect my property from the High Park Fire, will I still pay my same water rate?

A. Yes. Current water rates will stay in place as mandated by City code. Please refer to fcgov.com/utilities/residential/rates/water for complete information on 2012 water rates.

Q. Will we have an adequate drinking water supply if Horsetooth water is being used to fight the High Park Fire?

A. Yes. Our water supplies are adequate and will remain so. Horsetooth currently has about 130,000 acre-feet of available water. A typical fire load is 1,000 gallons; one acre-foot equals 326 fire loads.