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SOUTH CAROLINA

For Immediate Release – August 23, 2023

City of Florence Experiences System-Wide Water Quality Issues

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FLORENCE, SC – Over the past few months, the City of Florence has received an unusually high number of discolored water complaints from our customers. We understand the frustration of our utility customers and accept full responsibility to provide the best water quality for those we serve.

While there is not a single cause for the recent increase in discolored water, there are situations that have potentially made it worse. Iron is a naturally occurring mineral in the water in our area and over time, iron deposits can accumulate and settle in our water mains. As turbulence is created, these accumulated deposits can be stirred up creating discoloration, or a “dirty” water appearance. There are likely several contributing factors to the recent uptick in discolored water. These factors include specific wells and groundwater plants which are currently offline for maintenance and repair, adjustments in treatment protocols to manage increased iron levels, the water line replacement project along Alligator Road and adjoining areas, improper use of hydrants by contractors, line breaks and any other activities that disrupt the normal flow of processed water.

City staff has been working to address discolored water occurrences, but due to the number of concerns system-wide, we are reviewing the entire system and developing a more comprehensive and systematic approach to address the issue. On Monday, August 21, 2023, we assembled a group of water service professionals that included city employees and Water Production and Distribution Engineering Consultants to address the current water quality issues. The Water Quality Team defined short- and long-term strategies and will meet regularly to discuss and track progress to ensure that our approaches are having a positive effect, as well as determine changes that need to be implemented moving forward. As plans are initiated, impacted customers will be notified regarding work in their area which could create disruptions to service or possibly additional occurrences of discoloration while the issue is being addressed. Depending upon the course of action, it could be necessary for customers to flush the lines at their home to aid in clearing the discoloration from their internal system.

If a customer is experiencing discolored water, city staff recommends that customers follow these steps for troubleshooting and reporting:

- 1. Contact the Public Works & Utilities Department (843-665-3236)** – We encourage utility customers to take the time to report all discolored water concerns. Utilities staff is actively mapping complaints to track and monitor water quality issues, responding to all calls, conducting water samples, and ultimately working to pinpoint the root cause.

Customers should contact the Public Works & Utilities Department directly at 843-665-3236. Public Works & Utilities personnel are available by phone Monday – Friday, 7:30am – 4:00pm. The city provides 24/7 accessibility as calls are forwarded to police dispatch after hours (including evenings, weekends, and holidays). City Police personnel can reach evening and on-call work crews to address issues that need immediate attention. While Facebook and other social media platforms are often utilized for communications, customers are encouraged to contact the Public Works & Utilities Department directly with these concerns.

- 2. Compare hot and cold water** – If only the hot water is discolored, the color is likely from the water heater or pipes and the issue may be internal to a customer's home. If only the cold water is discolored, or the color is appearing in both hot and cold water, it is likely a city issue that should be reported.
- 3. Check all faucets inside and outside your home, including toilets.** If you see discoloration at **all** faucets, including toilets, the color is not likely from a location in the home and should be reported.

The City of Florence strives to achieve optimized water quality levels for our customers and recognizes the importance of ensuring the water provided to our customers meets all water quality standards. We apologize to our customers for the inconvenience and aggravation these discoloration issues have created and ask for your continued patience as we work to bring resolution to this problem.