

Water Quality - Questions / Answers

NOTE: "The questions are related to water coming into the Support Site"

- 1) Are EU standards for water quality similar to the US?

Yes they are.

Our drinking water fully complies with the Department of Defense's (DoD) Italy Environmental Final Governing Standards (FGS), which are derived from the U.S. DoD Overseas Environmental Baseline Guidance Document (OEBGD), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Italy's drinking water standards. When Italy and U.S. standards differ, the FGS adopts the most protective requirement. Some EU and Italian standards are more stringent than the US standards: as an example, for Chromium, the U.S. maximum contaminant level (MCL) is 0.1 mg/L, the Italian MCL is 0.050 mg/L; for Cyanide, the U.S. MCL is 0.2 mg/L, the Italian MCL is 0.050 mg/L.

- 2) How often is the water tested for harmful bacteria?

The Bacteriological Tests (BacT) are performed on weekly bases. Samples are collected from dedicated sampling stations along the Support Site water main distribution system as required by compliance regulations. The samples are then analyzed by a certified lab and test results are reported to the Environmental Office.

- 3) How quickly will you know there's a problem with the water?

It depends from the problem's type you refer to, it may vary from few seconds to some days.

As an example, if the problem is related to low free chlorine residual, it can be detected in few seconds.

For some bacteria the testing method may require two or three days to execute. If there is a problem with one of the samples, the certified lab will notify us immediately.

- 4) What chemicals are used to treat the water?

The water incoming at Support Site is already treated by the Italian water purveyor Acqua Campania, providing disinfection with chlorine dioxide and sodium hypochlorite, a form of liquid chlorine.

- 5) Why does the water sometimes smell like bleach?

This is a side effect of chlorine dioxide. Similar to individuals for whom cilantro tastes like soap for some people due to a genetic switch, a small percentage of individuals are sensitive to the formation of free chlorine, which can form when chlorine dioxide treated water is crashing together like in a tub, sink or dishwasher. (An even smaller group of people will smell cat urine when this happens). The installation monitors the actual chlorine levels in the water every 5 minutes by an electronic measuring system that notifies operators if the chlorine rises above a set level.

- 6) What is the white residue on faucets and dishware? Is this harmful?

The white residue is the result of calcium scale build up. The water in Italy is extremely hard and is comparable to the hard water levels in the desert southwest in the U.S. It is not harmful and can usually be removed by soaking in vinegar, for example the aerator on the faucet can be removed and soaked in vinegar overnight, then put back on the faucet in the morning. Some people will run a pot full of vinegar through their coffee pots once a month to deal with the scale build up there.

7) Why does brown water sometimes come out of pipes?

If it is your hot water pipe it could be from multiple causes but most likely it is from the boiler or water heater needing to be cleaned. If it is from the cold waterline it is most likely that the water has set for a long period of time (a weekend or longer) without being used. The normal action is to run your water for approx. 5 minutes, and that should take care of it. You may also want to clean the aerator on the end of the faucet (this should be done every 3-6 months) to remove any grit or other particles that happened to get into the line. This is also a good time to soak the screens in the aerator in vinegar to break up the scale before putting it back.