How to disinfect your drains

Sometimes customers report that their tap water smells septic, swampy, moldy, or like sewage or sewer gas, or sometimes sulfur or rotten eggs. These odors are often caused by gases produced by bacteria that live on food, soap, hair, and other organic matter that have settled in your drains. These gases are heavier than air, and remain in the drain until the water is turned on, expelling the gases into the air around the sink. Since the odor is only noticed when the water is running, it is natural to assume that the odor is coming from the water. To eliminate this type of odor, the bacteria must be killed by disinfecting the drain. Effective disinfection can be achieved by following the 6 steps described below:

Caution: do not mix any drain cleaners or detergents with bleach; certain combinations can create poisonous fumes!!

1. Run the cold water for 15 seconds into the drain that is to be disinfected, then turn the water off.
2. Pour approximately one to two cups of liquid laundry bleach (not powder) down the drain or drains where odor is present. Pour the bleach slowly around the edges of the drain so that it runs slowly down the sides of the drain. Be careful when you handle the bleach because it can irritate skin and damage clothing.
3. If the odor is coming from a sink with a garbage disposal, turn the disposal on for a few seconds while you pour the bleach. This will spread the bleach around the inside of the disposal.
4. Let the bleach sit in the drain for about 10 minutes -- no longer. Prolonged contact may cause pitting and/or discoloration.
5. After 10 minutes, run the hot water for a minute or two to flush out the bleach. Run water down a garbage disposal drain for the same amount of time.
6. Repeat these steps if the smell still lingers, or if it returns.

If this procedure does not solve the problem, or you still have a water quality concern, please contact Broomfield's Water Quality Laboratory at (303) 464-5606, or the Water Treatment Facility at (303) 464-5600.

Environmental Services
Public Works

4395 West 144th Avenue, BROOMFIELD, CO 80020