Updated 1.13.2025

New Jersey American Water – Raritan System Taste and Odor – FAQ

1. What is alpha-pinene and is it harmful?

   Alpha-pinene is a colorless oily substance that does not easily dissolve in water. Alpha-pinene is also highly photosensitive, which means it breaks down when it is exposed to sunlight. As it breaks down, it produces by-products, that have been detected in NJAW's water supplies at levels that are lower than the health based Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs).

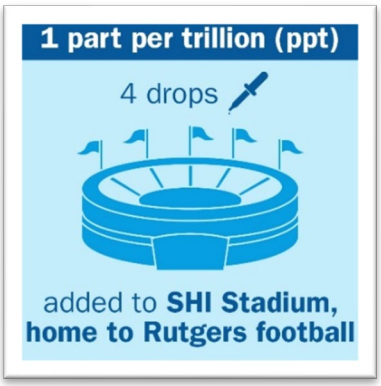
   Studies conducted in rats show that it takes a very large amount of alpha-pinene (300-2,000 parts per million [ppm]) to be harmful when ingested.

2. Was alpha-pinene detected in the drinking water?

   No. Alpha-pinene was detectable in the rinsate container that leaked from the repackaging facility, but once it entered the stormwater drain, and eventually the Raritan River it was diluted significantly. While the presence of alpha-pinene can still potentially be identified by its odor, the compound has not been detected by NJAW using advanced analytical chemistry testing in the finished water leaving the treatment facilities or in the water distribution system.

3. Why was there an odor to the water, if nothing was being detected?

   Alpha-pinene has not been detected above 0.1 parts per billion (0.0001 ppm) in the water. This suggests that extremely small amounts, likely in the parts-per-trillion range, may be present at levels far below the amount needed to cause harm are present and detectable by smell.



4. Are odor and/or taste issues still ongoing?

   As of January 9, there should be minimal, if any, customers observing taste/odor issues. If there are any customers who are continuing to observe taste and odor issues, they can contact NJAW.

5. What was the volume that leaked?

   While NJDEP is continuing to investigate the spill reported at M&U International on Monday, December 16, 2024, that is believed to be the source that contributed to the taste and odor issues, it is estimated that as much as 550 gallons of diluted rinsate from the leaking totes could have leaked into a tributary of the Raritan River.

6. Is there a cleanup plan or process in place? What does it look like?

   Somerset County OEM established booms, or floating barriers, around the impacted area in response to the initial spill. On December 17, 2024, at the direction of Somerset County OEM, M&U International hired a contractor to perform preliminary site clean-up. in addition to the on-site contractor, M&U International is required, and has since, hired a Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) to oversee clean-up the impacted soil. Characterization of the impacted soils or waterways, and any residual presence of product, along with cleanup is underway. DEP is committed to providing updates as new information is available.