The Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) supplies drinking water to campus.

As described in the notice below, OWASA will temporarily change their disinfection process from March 1 to March 31, 2013. This may change the taste or smell of campus water. If you use water for a special purpose in which residuals or other water characteristics are important, please carefully read the following information to understand how this change may affect you.

Also during the month of March, OWASA crews will be releasing water from some fire hydrants. The purpose of this "flushing" of water mains is to ensure that water with chlorine goes through the entire water system. This flushing may cause discoloration or air bubbles. If you experience this, please run cold water for about 5 minutes to clear it up.

The full text of OWASA’s notification to the University is reprinted below. It is also posted at the UNC Department of Environment, Health and Safety's (EHS) web site: http://ehs.unc.edu.

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY (A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community. RELEASE: February 19, 2013)

You may notice chlorine taste and odor in OWASA water in March and early April due to annual change in disinfection.

In March, OWASA will use chlorine instead of chloramines to disinfect drinking water. Chloramines are a compound of chlorine and ammonia that OWASA has used since 2002 for disinfection in months other than March. Disinfection with chloramines has improved the overall quality of our water and its taste and odor.

However, the State requires OWASA to use only chlorine for disinfection one month per year to ensure a high level of disinfection in our water system. (Chlorine is a more intense disinfectant than chloramines, but chloramines result in lower levels of certain disinfection byproducts that would be harmful at high levels.)

To remove chlorine taste and odor from OWASA water, you can: Filter the water with activated carbon. Water pitchers with activated carbon filters are sold locally. Let water sit for a day or so. (We suggest keeping the water in an open container stored in a refrigerator.) Boil the water for one minute to evaporate the chlorine. Add a few lemon slices to a pitcher of water. The lemon has ascorbic acid, which neutralizes the chlorine.

OWASA crews will release water from various fire hydrants on March 1, 2013. The purpose of this “flushing” of water pipes is to ensure that water with chlorine goes through the entire water system. The flushing of water mains may cause some discoloration of water because non-toxic sediment in our water pipes may be stirred up. To clear up discolored water, please run cold water through a bathtub faucet, etc. for 5 to 10 minutes. If the discoloration does not clear up, please contact OWASA at 919-968-4421.

For more information: Ken Loflin, Water Supply and Treatment Manager, 537-4232 or kloflin@owasa.org, or Rachel Monschein, Water Treatment Plant Laboratory Supervisor, 919-537-4227 or rmonschein@owasa.org