CONSUMER TIPS FOR PURCHASING WATER TREATMENT EQUIPMENT

Situation: You have had your water analyzed by a State approved laboratory and have discussed the results with your local health department or the State Department of Health Services Water Supply Division. Now you are ready to purchase water treatment equipment to correct the problem(s) identified. What are the key questions to ask when selecting water treatment equipment?

What to do: Depending upon the nature and scope of your problem, you may need to purchase more than one type of device. You will either need whole-house treatment (point of entry) or a single-tap device (point of use). The point-of-use options available and the treatment method to select will depend upon the contaminant in question.

For each company you are considering doing business with, check the length of time the company has been in business and its reputation. Ask for a list of customer referrals who have had similar problems whom you can contact. Check with the Better Business Bureau to determine if any complaints have been received. Inquire whether the device was tested under household conditions for the specific contaminant in question and for the advertised service life of the treatment device. Some equipment has a seal to indicate the product has been tested by a third party and meets industry standards. A Water Quality Association (WQA) or a National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) seal on a product indicates that the device meets certain water treatment performance criteria.

The consumer must be certain that enough treated water will be produced for daily use. The maximum flow rate should be sufficient for the peak home use rate. In some cases you may need to check whether the water system has the capacity for the treatment unit's maintenance requirement (well pump capacity for backwashing; adequate pressure for a reverse osmosis unit). If the device requires periodic
maintenance such as changing a filter or membrane, find out how often this needs to be done.

Ask what the installation and maintenance costs will be. How will electrical usage be affected? Read the warranty to determine what is covered, the lifetime expectancy of the product, and the length of time the warranty is in effect. Will the warranty be void if the consumer performs various maintenance tasks or if he or she fails to perform routine maintenance? Is a service person required to keep the warranty in effect?

Many units have a shutoff system and an alarm to tell you if the unit is malfunctioning. Always have a raw water tap installed upstream of any water treatment system so water quality and efficiency of the unit can be monitored. Finally, if it is appropriate, have your water tested after the treatment device has been installed to insure it is functioning properly.

By Mary Ellen Welch, Extension Educator, Home Economics.

References


Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Kirvin Knox, Director, Cooperative Extension System, The University of Connecticut, Storrs. The Connecticut Cooperative Extension System offers its programs to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex or disability and is an equal opportunity employer.