



Marshall Water Softener Replacement Program FAQs

Why is this Softener Salt Replacement Program necessary?

The City of Marshall must meet a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) limit for chloride in the wastewater discharge for the city. Chloride is not removed in the wastewater treatment processes. The wastewater treatment facility discharges to the Redwood River and chloride is harmful to aquatic life in the river. Water softener salt (sodium chloride) is the primary source of the chloride.

Why is chloride a problem?

It is very difficult to remove chloride from water. Chloride discharged to the Redwood River is toxic to aquatic life including aquatic insects, fish, and other critters that are important parts of the food chain. The MPCA has standards to limit how much chloride is allowed in the water to protect aquatic life.

What is water hardness or hard water?

Hard water is water that contains higher amounts of dissolved minerals, mainly calcium and magnesium. These minerals may cause scaling on pipes and plumbing fixtures. More information can be found here, [Water Quality Association-Hard and Soft Water](#) and here, [USGS-Water Hardness](#). Hardness is measured in milligrams per liter or grains per gallon. A chart of hardness along with additional information is found [here](#).

Do I need a water softener?

The new hardness of Marshall's water is right at the border between moderately hard and hard. Some may find this level of hardness acceptable and can get by without a softener. You can save money by not having to buy salt and using water to regenerate the softener. Businesses/industries may require soft water for specific processes. You will notice that less soap is needed for washing with soft vs. hard water. Scaling due to hard water can shorten the life of appliances such as a water heater. There are several [Advantages and Disadvantages of Water Softening](#) listed on this link.

Why should I participate?

Marshall Municipal Utilities upgraded its water treatment facility in 2021 to remove hardness, and asked residents and businesses to adjust hardness from 36 down to the current 8 grains per gallon. Thank you to those that participated in this adjustment! It did help in reducing chloride in the wastewater discharge. However, more work is needed. The more that participate, the more likely the city will be able to meet the MPCA permit limit.

Who is eligible to participate?

Homeowners and commercial facilities such as businesses, apartment buildings, and schools are eligible to participate. There must be a working water softener in the home/facility. Old inefficient water softeners are eligible for the replacement rebate. Homeowners and commercial facilities who remove a working water softener and decide not to replace it would be eligible for a removal rebate.

How do I participate?

DIY – Purchase an eligible water softener and install and submit paperwork required.
Water professional – Contact and they will be knowledgeable about what softener will work best for you.

Eligible softeners are rated at a minimum of 4,000 grains per pound of salt efficiency.

What benefits could there be for me?

Depending on the softener and its age, you may be able to reduce your salt use by as much as 90% and save money by not having to purchase as much salt.

What if I'm going to be installing or replacing a softener?

If you don't have an existing softener, you are not eligible for the rebate. If your softener isn't in working condition, you are not eligible for the rebate. However, if you have an old inefficient water softener that you want to replace, you will be eligible for \$500 toward a salt-efficient replacement softener.

How do I tell if my water softener is time clock-based?

Timer-based, also known as time clock, softeners are set to regenerate based on a schedule, such as every 3 days. Demand-based or demand-initiated softeners regenerate based on water use and are usually much more efficient. [Check here](#) for some photos and information comparing timer-based and demand-initiated softeners.

What if I don't have a softener?

If you do not currently have a water softener and are getting by without one, keep it that way. Adding a water softener will add salt to the wastewater treatment plant. If you decide you need a softener, purchase one with a minimum salt efficiency of 4000 grains hardness per pound of salt.

Are do-it-yourself water softener installations eligible for the rebate?

Yes. A homeowner can only replace a water softener in the dwelling that they reside in. You must follow state plumbing codes if removing your old softener or installing a new softener. More information can be found on the website and on the rebate form.

What if I have a softener but don't plan to use it anymore?

Homeowners who remove a working water softener and decide not to replace it would be eligible for a \$500 removal rebate. Proof of a functioning water softener and its current settings and/or previous salt consumption information will be needed to qualify for the rebate. If DIY you must follow state plumbing codes; see website for details.

What if I already adjusted my water softener hardness setting to 8 grains?

Optimization includes adjusting to the correct hardness, but also adjusting salt dose and other settings to increase salt use efficiency.

What if I am not a city of Marshall resident?

You must be a customer of Marshall Municipal Utilities and discharge to the Marshall Wastewater Treatment Facility to be eligible to participate in this program.

What if my softener is old?

If you have an old inefficient softener, it is eligible for a replacement rebate. Newer water softeners are not eligible for a replacement rebate.

What else can I do to reduce salt use?

The more water you use, the more often your softener will regenerate and use salt in that process. Water conservation practices will help you reduce water use.

Fix any water leaks. Find out more here: www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week

If you are softening your outside water, consider having a plumber remove the outside hose bibb from the softener. Softened water is not good for grass and other plants, and it costs you more in salt to soften the outside water. This [video](#) shows you how to test your outside water for hardness.

Softening just the cold water entering the water heater will reduce salt use and prevent scaling in water heater. This [video](#) shows you how to test your outside water for hardness.

How much money is available for rebates and optimization?

The program has \$30,000 in funds to use for replacement rebates. Rebates are contingent on fund availability. Check the [website](#) for an update on remaining funds. We expect them to go quickly.

When will the program end?

Rebates will be paid through the end of 2024 with the possibility of being ongoing into future budget years. Rebates will be provided contingent on fund availability. Check the website or call 537-6776 to make sure funds are available before replacing your water softener.