If you live in San Dimas and your filtered water suddenly tastes off, you are not imagining it. I see this complaint regularly from homeowners who invested in under sink filters, reverse osmosis systems, or whole house filtration and then feel let down when the water still tastes funny, stays hard, or comes out cloudy.

Bad taste is almost never the full story. It is a symptom that something in your water filtration system, your plumbing, or your incoming San Dimas water supply has changed. Once you understand how your system works and what is in local tap water, it becomes much easier to track down the cause and fix it instead of just guessing and swapping cartridges at random.

This guide walks through the real world issues I see most often in San Dimas homes, how to interpret them, and when it makes sense to repair versus replace equipment.

What is a water filtration system, really?

People use “water filter” to describe everything from a simple carbon cartridge under the sink to a multi stage setup that includes sediment filters, carbon, reverse osmosis, and a water softener.

At its core, a water filtration system is any equipment that removes or reduces specific contaminants from your water. Depending on the design, it might target:

- grit and sediment
- chlorine and disinfection byproducts
- hardness minerals like calcium and magnesium
- dissolved salts and metals
- tastes and odors

The actual mechanics vary. A basic carbon filter adsorbs chlorine and organic compounds on the surface of carbon granules. A sediment cartridge physically strains out sand and rust using a mesh or pleated material. A reverse osmosis system uses a semipermeable membrane, forcing water across under pressure so that dissolved solids stay behind and water filtration repair san dimas go down the drain.

So when you wonder “How does a water filtration system work?” the honest answer is: it depends which stages you have. Most San Dimas homes with “filtered water” at the sink are running either a carbon under sink system or a reverse osmosis (RO) unit with several filters in series.

That difference matters a lot when your filtered water tastes bad, runs slow, or stops altogether.

What is in San Dimas tap water?

You cannot troubleshoot taste problems without at least a basic idea of what your water looks like before it hits your filter.

San Dimas does not have a single city operated water utility. Retail water service is typically provided by companies such as Golden State Water Company and Covina Irrigating Company in different parts of the city. Those retail providers, in turn, may purchase imported water from wholesalers such as Three Valleys Municipal Water District, blend it with local groundwater, or rely more heavily on wells depending on the season and supply.

Several consistent patterns show up in San Dimas:

Hardness: Local water is typically “hard” to “very hard.” It often tests above 120 mg/L (milligrams per liter) as calcium carbonate, sometimes much higher. If you see white scale on fixtures or cloudy film on glasses, that is hardness.

Chlorine: For disinfection, utilities commonly use free chlorine or chloramine. Chlorine gives that swimming pool smell and sharp taste. Most people notice it right away once levels climb, especially if they grew used to filtered water.

Dissolved solids: Total dissolved solids (TDS) can be moderate to high, depending on the blend of surface water and groundwater. Higher TDS gives water a fuller mouthfeel and can sometimes taste “mineral” or slightly salty.

Is San Dimas water safe to drink? Utilities are legally required to meet state and federal drinking water standards, and published Consumer Confidence Reports generally show compliance. “Safe” in the regulatory sense does not always mean pleasant taste, no scale, or no odor, which is why so many residents add filtration or softening.

If your water suddenly tastes stronger, more chemical, or more earthy, it could be a change at the utility level, a seasonal shift in source water, or a problem in your own system.

Why does my filtered water taste bad?

When someone calls me and says that, the answer usually falls into one of a handful of buckets.

The most common causes are:

Old filters that have reached or exceeded their service life. Carbon, in particular, has a finite capacity. Once saturated, it can start letting chlorine, chloramine, or other organics pass through, so the water tastes like raw tap again. In some cases, exhausted carbon can even grow bacteria and give a musty or “stale” flavor.

Improperly flushed new filters. A brand new carbon cartridge can release carbon dust and microbubbles. If you do not flush the recommended number of gallons, you can get grayish water with a chalky or slightly bitter taste.

Changes in incoming water. If the utility increases chlorine dosage or switches sources, the taste of your filtered water may change even if the filter is working correctly. This is especially noticeable when the system is marginally sized or filters are near the end of their life.

Stagnant water in low use lines. If you only use that filtered tap once a day, water sits in the filter housing and faucet body. Over time, it can pick up metallic taste from fixtures or a flat, stale taste, especially with warm indoor temperatures.

Cross connection with unfiltered lines. A misplumbed under sink system, a faulty faucet, or a leak can let unfiltered or partially filtered water mix in. The result is inconsistent taste, sometimes good, sometimes bad, from the same spout.

Smell and taste go hand in hand. “Why does my filtered water taste bad?” often pairs with “Why is my filtered water cloudy?” or “Why is my water filter making a noise?” Those combine to tell a fuller story about what is wrong.

Cloudy water, slow flow, and other clues

Taste rarely changes in isolation. When I troubleshoot systems around San Dimas, I listen carefully for the rest of the symptoms. You can do the same at home.

If your filtered water is cloudy but clears from the bottom up within a minute or two in the glass, that is usually dissolved air coming out of solution, not contamination. It is common when cold water warms in indoor pipes, after the utility repairs a main, or after filter changes. It is visually alarming but often harmless.

If the cloudiness stays or you see fine white particles settling, I start to suspect hardness scaling, filter media breakdown, or a failing water softener sending resin beads downstream. When someone asks why their water still seems hard after filtration, the answer is often that their “filter” never targeted hardness at all. Regular under sink filters do not remove calcium and magnesium, so the water will remain hard.

Slow flow tells you about restriction. If your water filtration system is slow, either the cartridge is clogged, a shutoff valve is partially closed, or, in RO systems, you have a membrane or pressure problem. A sediment filter that is doing its job in a house with old galvanized pipes can clog surprisingly fast because it is catching years of rust and scale breaking loose.

Low pressure after the filter is a warning. It can be simple clogging, but it can also reveal undersized piping, a kinked tube, or a pressure regulator issue. When people ask what causes low water pressure after a water filter, my first step is to compare pressure and flow before and after the filter housing. If it drops dramatically through the filter, your restriction is there. If it is low on both sides, the issue lies upstream.

Noisy filters add another layer. A water filter making a noise, especially a humming or rapid clicking, often signals air in the lines or a pressure reducing valve chattering because of sudden flow changes. A reverse osmosis system that gurgles for a while after the tank empties is usually functioning normally. Loud “water hammer” bangs are a different beast and relate to plumbing shock when valves close abruptly.

Every one of these symptoms, from cloudy water to slow flow to odd noise, also appears in systems that are still technically “working” but no longer giving you the taste, softness, or reliability you paid for.

How often should water filters be replaced and systems serviced?

Filter life is one of the most abused numbers in the industry. Marketing materials love to say “up to 6 months” or “up to 1 year” without explaining that this depends completely on your usage and the quality of incoming water.

For most San Dimas homes, I give these practical ranges:

Sediment cartridges: Every 3 to 6 months, or sooner if you see visible pressure drop. In older homes with rusty lines, you may need them more often at first.

Carbon block or granular carbon taste and odor filters: Every 6 to 12 months for typical family use. If you have a heavy chlorine load or high usage, lean toward 6 months.

Reverse osmosis prefilters (sediment and carbon): Roughly every 6 to 12 months, because they protect the more expensive RO membrane.

Reverse osmosis membrane: About 2 to 5 years, depending on incoming TDS, hardness, and how well prefilters are maintained. When people ask “How long does a reverse osmosis filter last?” they usually mean the membrane. TDS creep on a handheld meter is a good indicator of when it is time.

Whole house carbon systems: Media may last several years in a properly sized tank, but the system still needs annual checkups to verify flow rates, backwash function, and pressure.

Service intervals for a complete water filtration system are usually every 12 months at minimum. This is when a professional can test water before and after the system, check valves and fittings for leaks, and adjust settings. If you ask “How often should a water filtration system be serviced?” the real answer is: as often as needed to catch small problems before they become large, but no less than yearly for most homes.

As for lifespan, many systems are mechanically sound for 10 to 15 years if maintained. That said, plastics age, o-rings harden, and new technology may offer better performance. So “How long do water filtration systems last?” is part engineering, part economics, and part personal tolerance for risk.

Why is my water filtration system not working at all?

Sometimes the complaint is not bad taste but “Why is no water coming out of my water filter?” or “Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?” This is where we move from fine tuning to basic function checks.

Here is a simple at home checklist you can walk through before you call for help:

1. Confirm the dedicated shutoff valve to the filter is fully open, and the main house water is on.
2. Check for kinks or crushed tubing around the filter housings, refrigerator, or RO storage tank.
3. Inspect the filter housings for obvious leaks or drips, and verify that the cartridges are seated correctly.
4. For RO systems, gently lift the storage tank; if it feels completely empty, the system is not refilling, which points to feed, valve, or membrane issues; if it is very heavy but no water comes from the faucet, suspect a clogged postfilter or failed tank valve.
5. Compare flow from a nearby unfiltered tap with the filtered tap to tell whether the problem is local to the filter.

That brief sequence resolves a surprising number of “not working” complaints. Homeowners bump shutoff valves while cleaning under the sink, install cartridges backwards, or cross the in and out lines. A whole house water filter that stopped allowing flow may simply have a cartridge so clogged with sediment that it is acting as a plug.

If your filter is leaking, things become more urgent. A small drip from the housing threads usually means an o-ring that is dirty, dry, or twisted. A steady leak from the top of a whole house system can be a cracked head assembly

or a damaged pressure relief button. When people ask “How do I find a leak in my water filtration system?” I tell them to dry all surfaces, then use a flashlight and paper towel to trace every joint and seam right after turning the water back on. Even small leaks can cause substantial damage over time.

If the system froze, that is another category entirely. Yes, a water filter system can freeze and break. Filter housings and cartridges are not tolerant of ice expansion. In San Dimas, that risk is lower than in colder climates, but outdoor and garage installs still see cold snaps. Hairline cracks from freezing sometimes only open up fully when the system returns to normal pressure. Whenever a system has been exposed to freezing, I recommend a careful visual inspection and a pressure test before putting it back into full service.

Hard water, softeners, and filters that “do nothing”

Many San Dimas homeowners say something like: “We installed a filter, so why is my water still hard after filtration?” The expectation gap comes from confusing filtration with softening.

A typical under sink water filter does not remove hardness. It is designed to remove sediment and chlorine and improve taste, not to strip calcium and magnesium from the water. You might notice slight scaling reduction downstream of a good RO unit, because it reduces overall dissolved solids, but your showers, dishwasher, and laundry are still seeing hard water unless you have a dedicated water softener or a specialized anti scale system.

A water softener swaps calcium and magnesium for sodium or potassium on a resin bed. That process happens before the water reaches your filter, or in some cases parallel to it. When someone complains their water softener is not working with their filter, the usual culprits are:

Bypass valves in the wrong position, sending part of the water around the softener.

Incorrect plumbing sequence, where the filter is before the softener and clogs with hardness scale.

Softener settings off, so the system is not regenerating often enough for the real hardness load.

Resin exhausted or fouled after years of service.

If you are deciding what is the best water filtration system for hard water, you are really asking about a combined strategy. In San Dimas, a very common and effective setup is a whole house softener or scale control system to protect fixtures and water heaters, paired with a point of use RO or carbon filter at the kitchen sink for drinking and cooking water.

Common problems, from chlorine to constant clogging

Across dozens of homes, I see the same patterns repeat.

Filters not removing chlorine: Often the wrong type or rating of carbon is installed, or the flow rate is too high. A small inline carbon filter on a refrigerator cannot handle the same chlorine load as a full sized cartridge under the sink. When someone asks “Why is my water filter not removing chlorine?” I start by checking the filter’s certification and design flow. If the water is racing through faster than the carbon can adsorb, chlorine slip through is inevitable.

Filters that keep clogging: A “problem filter” that plugs again and again usually means your incoming water has more sediment or rust than expected. You may need a larger sediment stage, a different micron rating, or staged filtration with a coarse prefilter followed by a finer one. In San Dimas, older galvanized lines or private well connections can feed a lot of debris into a new system until the pipes stabilize.

Low flow or pressure after a filter change: People often ask what causes low water pressure after a water filter right after they upgraded to a finer micron cartridge “for better filtration.” Finer is not always better if your plumbing or pressure is marginal. Each step down in micron rating adds resistance. That is why it is important to match the filter to your actual water quality and usage, not just choose the finest option on the shelf.

Systems that need to be “reset”: Many electronic and RO systems have a simple reset procedure for filter change indicators and alarms. “How do I reset my water filtration system?” is typically answered in the manual with a button press sequence or a timed hold. Resetting the indicator does not reset the actual water quality, though. Never use the reset as an excuse to delay real maintenance.

Repair versus replacement: what makes sense financially?

At some point, every homeowner asks some version of “Is it worth repairing a water filtration system?” and “Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?” There is no universal answer, but a few practical cost ranges help organize the decision.

Here is a simplified comparison to frame your thinking:

- Basic under sink filter repair, such as o-rings, fittings, or a cracked housing, may run from tens to a couple of hundred dollars, including labor, if you hire someone. A completely new basic under sink system often costs in the low hundreds for parts plus installation.
- Reverse osmosis system repair, such as replacing the membrane, all cartridges, and a few fittings, usually lives in the low to mid hundreds with labor. A quality new RO system, professionally installed, often costs in a similar ballpark but can be higher depending on brand and options.
- Whole house filter or softener repairs range widely. Valve rebuilds, control heads, or media replacement can cost from a few hundred to over a thousand dollars. A new whole house system is typically in the thousands, including proper installation and startup.

If the system is relatively new and the problem is confined to consumables or a simple part, repair is almost always worth it. If the unit is over 10 years old, plastic components are brittle, parts are hard to find, and newer systems operate more efficiently, replacement starts to make more sense.

I encourage homeowners to ask any contractor a direct version of: “How much does a water filtration system cost to replace in my situation, and how much does it cost to repair what I have?” Honest side by side numbers prevent you from pouring good money into a dying unit.

DIY, plumbers, and finding the right help

Not every problem needs a professional. Changing cartridges, for example, is well within the ability of most homeowners who are mildly handy.

If you are wondering “Can I change my water filter myself?” or “How do I change a water filter cartridge?” the broad steps are straightforward: shut off water to the filter, relieve pressure using the small red button or faucet, unscrew the housing with the provided wrench, replace the old cartridge with the new one in the correct orientation, check or replace the o-ring with a light coat of silicone grease, tighten the housing snugly, then restore water and check for leaks. Then flush according to the manufacturer’s instructions to clear air and fines.

Under sink filters are usually the easiest to maintain yourself. Reverse osmosis systems are slightly more complex, but many homeowners still handle regular filter changes on their own.

Whole house systems and softeners are where I suggest more caution. A misstep on a main line can leak for hours before you notice, and incorrectly set bypass valves can leave your home without protection. When people ask “Do I need a plumber for water filter repair?” my answer is: if the repair involves cutting or reworking main water lines, or if you are not fully confident in shutting down and restoring water to the house, a licensed plumber or experienced water treatment technician is worth the cost.

“Who repairs water filtration systems?” depends on your area. In and around San Dimas, it is typically a mix of:

Licensed plumbers with water treatment experience.

Dedicated water treatment companies that design, install, and service filtration and softening systems.

Occasionally, appliance repair companies for integrated refrigerator filters and similar components.

For specific hardware questions like “How do you repair a reverse osmosis system?” or “How do you fix a whole house water filter?” the best practice is to start with the brand and model. A generic fix can sometimes cause more trouble than it solves. The same goes for problems like “How do you fix an under sink water filter that is stuck?” Often the answer is as simple as using the correct housing wrench and relieving pressure fully before trying to turn.

A recurring nuisance is the stuck cartridge. “How do you remove a stuck water filter?” usually comes down to three things: fully relieve pressure in the housing, use the proper tool (not just brute force by hand), and support the plumbing so you are not twisting the attached pipes. If a housing feels truly seized, it is safer to call a professional than snap a fitting in the wall.

Getting your San Dimas filtered water back to tasting right

A bad taste in your filtered water is irritating, but it is also valuable feedback. It tells you the system needs attention, whether that means fresh filters, a plumbing repair, or a bigger picture look at how your filtration matches San Dimas water quality.

The key points to carry with you are these:

Your filters have finite capacity, and local hard, chlorinated water is demanding. Respect the replacement intervals.

Taste, cloudiness, flow, and noise are all signals. Combine them, do a few simple checks, and you will often pinpoint the issue before you even open the toolbox.

Filtration and softening do different jobs. If you still have hard water after installing a “filter,” it may be working perfectly within its design and simply not addressing hardness at all.

Repair is usually worthwhile for newer systems and minor component failures. Beyond a certain age, replacement gives better reliability and water quality.

Above all, do not ignore a change in taste. Whether your San Dimas water now tastes like a swimming pool, a rusty pipe, or just “off,” that change is telling you something about your water, your plumbing, or your filtration. Address it early, and your system will reward you with years of clean, pleasant water instead of an endless cycle of frustration and guesswork.

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