



# Suburban Property Inspections

Know what to expect - INSPECT<sup>sm</sup>  
Family owned and operated since 1988

## MBAS FACT SHEET

(Methylene blue active substances) used to detect detergents and foaming agents

### Brief Overview:

<b>Category:</b>	Inorganics
<b>Acceptable Level:</b>	0.5 mg/L MCL, Secondary Drinking Water Standard
<b>Source:</b>	Household and Industry Usage
<b>Effect:</b>	Causes water to foam and have a bad taste
<b>Follow up:</b>	Test for MBAS
<b>Treatment:</b>	Eliminate the source if possible. Activated carbon filter.

### Details:

**Source:** Detergents enter the environment from household and industry usage. Detergents are a contaminant found in the National Secondary Drinking Water Regulations. The EPA does not enforce these "secondary maximum contaminant levels." They are established only as guidelines to assist public water systems in managing their drinking water for aesthetic considerations, such as taste, color, and odor. These contaminants are not considered to present a risk to human health at the secondary maximum contaminant level.

The EPA believes that if these contaminants are present in your water at levels above these standards, the contaminants may cause a great number of people to stop using water from their public water system even though the water is actually safe to drink.

Secondary standards are set to give public water systems some guidance on removing these chemicals to levels that are below what most people will find to be noticeable. These problems include: aesthetic, cosmetic, and technical effects.

Aesthetic effects - undesirable tastes or odors.

Cosmetic effects - effects which do not damage the body but are still undesirable.

Technical effects - damage to water equipment or reduced effectiveness of treatment for other contaminants.

Foaming is usually caused by detergents and similar substances when water has been agitated or aerated as in many faucets. An off-taste described as oily, fishy, or perfume-like is commonly associated with foaming. However, these tastes and odors may be due to the breakdown of waste products rather than the detergents themselves.

Problems associated with Detergents include but are not limited to: frothy, cloudy, bitter taste; odor may indicate contamination from drain fields or wash water runoff. Other contaminants may be present if this is the case.

**Effect:** Short-term: potentially undesirable tastes, odors, and/or staining.

**Follow up:** Treat and re-test for MBAS

**Treatment:** Depending on the cause, there are treatment options that range from simply locating and eliminating the source, to treating with chlorine for waste-water issues, to installing an activated carbon filter which can remove low levels of detergent.

Following installation of this system, the consumer should have the treated water tested for MBAS to verify MBAS reduction is being achieved and the system is functioning properly. For more information visit the USEPA web site:

For further technical assistance, call Suburban Property Inspections at 1-866-866-6700, or call the

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.



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