



Fact Sheet:

Inland Empire and Water Softeners

Only about 1 in 20 houses in Inland Empire use customary water softeners

According to a recent study by the Awwa Research Foundation, 5.35% of homes have self-regenerative water softeners. (Source: "Characterizing and Managing Salinity Loadings in Reclaimed Water Systems," 2006, AwwaRF.) By way of comparison, this is five times lower than the market penetration in Santa Clarita and four times lower than penetration in Phoenix, Arizona. Clearly, the salinity contribution by softeners in Inland Empire is smaller than other areas facing the issue.

Softeners contribute only about five percent of salinity in the water

According to news reports, the Inland Empire Utility Agency estimates that about 25 milligrams of salt per liter in recycled water are released by softeners. Current total salt amounts are somewhere below 500 mg per liter. Therefore, around 95 percent of salinity comes from other sources. This makes it even more crucial for a comprehensive solution to be found.

The softener ban history suggests IEUA will fail with its ordinance

In nearby Santa Clarita, a ban similar to the IEUA ordinance is being attempted, and the results are discouraging. Despite promises, the softener ban did not do nearly enough to resolve local salinity issues, even though the percent of homes with softeners in Santa Clarita is almost five times higher than in Inland Empire.

The benefits of softeners to the environment will be lost with a ban

Hard water significantly harms pipes and appliances, which means bigger landfills and more energy consumption. For example, gas water heaters using soft water maintain their original factory efficiency rating over a 15-year lifetime, but using hard water can lead to the loss of almost a quarter of the efficiency in water heaters.

In fact, soft water is absolutely necessary for the operation of tankless water heaters. It has also been shown that clothing and household linens are harmed by hard water. Further, two new independent studies show consumers using soft water can cut back on dish and laundry detergent use by 50 percent or more and can lower washing machine temperatures from hot to cold just by using softened water.