

If you live in San Dimas, you already know the water has a personality of its own. It is typically safe to drink by regulatory standards, but it often runs hard, can leave spots on fixtures, and sometimes has a noticeable chlorine taste or odor. That is why so many homes rely on some type of water filtration system, from simple under sink filters to large whole house units and reverse osmosis systems.

When that system stops working, you feel it quickly. Dishes start spotting, your coffee tastes off, your shower feels different, or your reverse osmosis faucet slows to a trickle. I see the same patterns in San Dimas homes over and over, and most issues come back to a handful of causes.

This guide walks through how water filtration systems work in practical terms, why they fail in San Dimas specifically, and how to decide whether to repair or replace a struggling system.

A quick word about San Dimas water

Before blaming the filter, it helps to understand what the system is trying to handle.

San Dimas is served by more than one water provider. Portions of the city receive water through the City of San Dimas in coordination with regional wholesalers such as Metropolitan Water District and Covina Irrigating Company. Other areas are served by private utilities like Golden State Water Company. Your bill will tell you which system you are on.

Across these supplies, three things are usually true:

1. The water is treated and regulated, so by state and federal standards it is generally considered safe to drink.
2. Total hardness is on the high side. In practical terms, that means mineral rich water with calcium and magnesium that leave scale in pipes, water heaters, and fixtures.
3. The water is disinfected, commonly with chlorine or chloramine, which protects public health but often affects taste and smell.

Because of that combination, many San Dimas homeowners install systems that target hardness, chlorine, and general taste and odor issues, sometimes with an additional drinking water system such as reverse osmosis.

What is a water filtration system, in real life terms?

The phrase “water filtration system” covers a lot of ground. In local homes I regularly see four main types.

A basic point of use filter, usually under the kitchen sink, uses carbon cartridges to remove chlorine, some organics, and improve taste. A whole house filter sits on the main line where water enters the house. It can be a simple sediment cartridge, a large carbon tank, or a combination, and it protects every tap and appliance.

A reverse osmosis (RO) system lives under a sink and sends water through multiple filters and a membrane that separates out a high percentage of dissolved solids. It usually feeds a dedicated faucet and sometimes the refrigerator. A water softener is technically a treatment system, not a filter, but many people lump it in. It uses ion exchange to swap hardness minerals for sodium or potassium, giving you softer water.

These systems often work together. In San Dimas, I commonly see a stack like this: a whole house sediment and carbon filter, followed by a softener, plus a reverse osmosis system at the kitchen sink.

How does a water filtration system work?

No matter how fancy the brochure, most systems work in three straightforward stages.

First, they screen or strain. Sediment filters catch sand, rust, and fine particulates. If those get past the first line of defense, they clog everything else.

Second, they adsorb or exchange. Carbon filters adsorb chlorine, some pesticides, and organic compounds onto their surface. Softeners exchange hardness minerals for sodium or potassium on a resin bed.

Third, they polish or separate. Reverse osmosis membranes separate water from a large portion of dissolved salts and contaminants, then store that water in a small tank. Some systems add a final polishing carbon stage for taste.

When you ask "Why is my water filtration system not working?", what you are really asking is which of those stages has broken down, clogged, or worn out.

1. No water, or barely a trickle

If you turn on the tap and nothing much comes out, it feels dramatic, but the underlying cause is usually simple.

On whole house filters and under sink units in San Dimas, the most common culprit is a clogged cartridge. Our hard water and occasional sediment spikes give filters a workout. If you have not changed cartridges on schedule, they plug up and restrict flow. That is often why no water is coming out of your water filter, even though the rest of the plumbing is fine.

On reverse osmosis systems, low or no flow can be a few things at once: a clogged sediment or carbon pre filter, a fouled RO membrane, a malfunctioning automatic shutoff valve, or a tank that has lost pressure. I get called out for "Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?" and find a tank with almost no air charge more often than you might think.



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Before calling anyone, there is a short set of checks you can safely do.

- Confirm the main water supply is on and that any shutoff valve at the filter is open.
- Open a different faucet to see if the low pressure affects the whole house or only the filtered tap.
- Look for kinked or crushed tubing near under sink filters or RO systems.
- If you know how, gently bypass the filter housing. If flow returns, the filter itself is the restriction.

If you are comfortable with basic plumbing, you can shut the water, relieve pressure, and replace a cartridge. If the system uses quick connect tubing, take a photo before disconnecting anything so you can reconnect correctly.

When you still have poor flow after a fresh filter change, or when a reverse osmosis tank feels completely full but delivers only a cup or two, that is the point at which you usually want a professional to check valves, tank pressure, and the membrane.

2. Water leaking at or around the filter

A little drip under the sink can quickly damage cabinets and flooring. “Why is my water filter leaking?” is one of the more urgent calls I get, especially in older San Dimas homes where cabinetry has seen a few decades of use.

The most common sources are surprisingly small details. Cartridges or housings that were cross threaded, O rings that were not lubricated or are out of position, housings that were over tightened and cracked, or tubing that is not fully seated in quick connect fittings.

Hard water makes this worse over time. Mineral buildup around O rings and housings can prevent a proper seal. In outdoor or garage installations, systems that have frozen in an unusual cold snap can also crack housings and fittings. Yes, a water filter system can freeze and break if it is installed in an unprotected area without insulation.

If you want to find a leak in your water filtration system without tearing everything apart, dry the [Water Filtration Repair San Dimas](#) area carefully, then wrap paper towel around likely joints and fittings. Turn the water on and wait several minutes. The wet spot on the towel will usually point you in the right direction.

Hairline cracks in plastic housings are typically not repairable. At that point, it becomes a replacement decision: just the damaged component, or the entire system if it is old and out of support.

3. Bad taste or odor in filtered water

Filtered water that tastes or smells off is usually a sign that the filtration media is exhausted rather than a mystery contamination event. When people ask “Why does my filtered water taste bad?”, the answer almost always comes back to one of three things.

First, carbon filters that are past their service life. Once the carbon is full, it cannot adsorb more chlorine and organics, so taste and odor return. You might notice the water smells like a swimming pool again. If your water filter is not removing chlorine anymore, this is the most likely reason.

Second, low use or stagnation. Under sink filters and RO systems that sit unused for long stretches, such as in a guest house, allow water to sit in contact with the filter and tubing. That stagnant water can pick up plastic or rubber tastes or develop a “stale” flavor.

Third, interaction between a softener and drinking water. Some people notice a slightly different taste when drinking softened water. That is why many San Dimas homes run the kitchen cold tap on unsoftened but filtered water, or on RO, and reserve softened water for showers, laundry, and appliances.

Replacing carbon filters on schedule usually solves these issues. If you change filters and still have strange taste or odor, look at whether any tubing runs across a warm area, near a dishwasher drain, or close to a source of odors. Rarely, I see RO drain lines connected incorrectly so that kitchen sink odors can travel back toward the system.

4. Cloudy filtered water or tiny bubbles

Cloudy or milky looking water causes anxiety, especially when it comes from your “clean” faucet. In San Dimas, the cause is often harmless: micro bubbles.

When cold water under pressure warms slightly as it enters your home, it can release dissolved gases as tiny bubbles. After filtration, that effect can be noticeable, particularly with reverse osmosis water. If you pour a glass and the cloudiness clears from bottom to top within a minute or two, you are seeing trapped air, not contamination. That answers the question for many people who ask “Why is my filtered water cloudy?”

Actual particulate cloudiness behaves differently. It tends to settle over time, or you see fine particles at the bottom of a glass. That can signal a failing cartridge that is shedding material, a cracked internal tube in a tank style filter, or sediment bypassing a damaged filter core.

If cloudiness is new, does not clear, or comes with gritty texture or unusual taste, you should not ignore it. In those cases, I recommend shutting off the filtration system, running unfiltered cold water for basic use, and booking a service call. The system may have failed internally in a way that allows media or accumulated material to enter your drinking water.

5. System is working, but water is still hard

“Why is my water still hard after filtration?” is a question of expectations. Most filters do not remove hardness at all. A standard whole house carbon filter, even a high quality one, is not a softener. It improves taste, odor, and sometimes chlorine byproducts, but it does not pull out calcium and magnesium.

To reduce hardness, you need either a traditional salt based softener, a salt free conditioning technology with realistic performance, or a reverse osmosis system serving the specific faucet where you care about spots and film, such as for drinking and cooking.

If you already have a softener and still see scale, a few things might be going on:

- The softener is out of salt, or the brine tank has a salt bridge that prevents proper regeneration.
- The control valve is misprogrammed for your San Dimas hardness level, which often runs higher than generic factory presets.
- The resin bed is exhausted or fouled with iron or other contaminants and no longer exchanges effectively.
- Plumbing is cross connected so that some lines bypass the softener.

When a water softener is not working with your filter, combining them properly matters. Ideally, sediment and carbon filtration come before the softener. That protects the resin and extends its life. Then, if you use reverse osmosis at the sink, softened water feeding the RO system allows the membrane to last longer.

6. Strange noises from the filter area

People rarely expect their water filter to make any sound. So when there is a hiss, gurgle, or ticking from under the sink or in the garage, the first question is “Why is my water filter making a noise?”

Reverse osmosis systems make several normal noises. When the tank is filling, you may hear a soft hiss from the small flow restrictor and a faint gurgling in the drain saddle. When the tank is full, a properly functioning automatic shutoff valve silences things.

Abnormal noises include hammering sounds from rapid on off flow, which can indicate a water hammer issue or a sticky valve, and loud continuous drain noises, which usually mean the RO system is not shutting off and is constantly dumping water to the drain.

Whole house systems can make noise if air enters the line during filter changes, or if a bypass valve is partially closed and water jets through a constricted path. In a few San Dimas homes, I have found filtration loops installed too close to lightweight framing, where normal vibration then resonates as an annoying buzz.

If noises are new, persistent, or accompanied by pressure changes or leaks, it is worth having the system checked. It is not just about comfort; abnormal flow often pairs with wasted water or premature component wear.

7. Filters clogging much faster than they used to

When someone calls and says, "Why does my water filter keep clogging? It used to last six months and now it barely makes it two," I look at both the system and what has changed in the water supply.

Construction, main breaks, or changes in regional supply can increase sediment temporarily. San Dimas, like much of Los Angeles County, sometimes switches between sources or blends imported and local groundwater. That can change both hardness and particulate content.

On the home side, adding new irrigation, remodeling, or a sudden increase in household occupants can boost water use dramatically. The filter is doing the same work, just more of it, so it reaches its capacity sooner.

In some cases, the original system was undersized for the real usage. A single cartridge whole house filter on a large home with multiple bathrooms will run through sediment at a remarkable pace. Upgrading to a dual stage system or a larger tank based filter can solve chronic clogging.

If your filters are clogging unusually fast without an obvious cause, or if you see a lot of rusty or sandy material in housings, it can be worth asking your provider about recent main work and, in some cases, testing a raw water sample for turbidity and hardness. That information helps size the right solution.

8. How often should filters be replaced and systems serviced?

Most people wait until there is a problem before asking "How often should water filters be replaced?" or "How often should a water filtration system be serviced?" In San Dimas, I advise a balance between manufacturer guidelines and real world conditions.

Typical ranges look like this:

- Sediment pre filters: every 3 to 6 months in most homes, sometimes sooner if you see visible discoloration.
- Carbon block or granular carbon filters: every 6 to 12 months, depending on usage and taste or odor changes.
- Reverse osmosis membranes: every 2 to 5 years. High hardness and heavy use push you toward the shorter end.
- Whole house carbon tanks: every 5 to 10 years for media replacement, depending on design, water quality, and flow volume.

General system service once a year is ideal. That includes checking for leaks, cleaning housings, sanitizing RO reservoirs and lines, verifying softener programming, and checking water pressure before and after filters. Many issues, such as slow flow or early clogging, show up as a rising pressure drop and can be handled before you notice symptoms at the tap.

If you are wondering “How long do water filtration systems last?” the answer is usually: the core hardware can last 8 to 15 years if you keep up with consumables and catch small problems early. Tank based systems with high quality valves often sit in that 10 plus year range; cheaper plastic under sink units may reach the end of economical repair sooner.

9. Repair vs replace: costs and practical decisions

Money questions come up quickly. “How much does a water filtration system cost?”, “How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system?”, and “Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?” are all versions of the same concern.

In the San Dimas area, very rough ranges look like this:

- Cartridge replacement and routine service: typically a low few hundred dollars, depending on number of filters and accessibility.
- Simple repairs, such as replacing a leaking housing or valve: often in the low to mid hundreds when parts and labor are combined.
- New under sink drinking filter systems: often from under a hundred dollars for basic units to several hundred for higher end or multi stage systems, before installation.
- New reverse osmosis systems: commonly a few hundred dollars for quality residential systems, plus installation, with premium brands and remineralization options costing more.
- New whole house systems and softeners: a wide range, from under a thousand dollars for basic big box units to several thousand for higher capacity, metered, or specialty systems installed by a professional.

Whether it is worth repairing a water filtration system depends on its age, parts availability, and how serious the failure is. As a rule of thumb, when a system is more than 10 years old and the needed repair exceeds roughly 40 percent of the cost of a modern replacement, I lean toward replacement, especially if the old system uses dated cartridges or components that are becoming hard to find.

On the other hand, a relatively new RO system with a leaking tank or a stuck shutoff valve is usually very worth repairing. Those are straightforward parts swaps, and the underlying design is still current.

10. DIY vs plumber vs water treatment specialist

A lot of homeowners ask, “Can I repair my water filtration system myself?” or “Do I need a plumber for water filter repair?” The honest answer is that it depends on your comfort with tools and the nature of the problem.

Safe, realistic DIY tasks include changing filter cartridges, sanitizing RO reservoirs with guidance, checking and topping up air pressure in an RO tank, replacing a refrigerator style inline filter, and adjusting softener salt levels and basic programming using the manual.

Situations where I strongly recommend calling a professional include leaks you cannot immediately trace or stop, repeated tripping of GFCI outlets around powered softeners or well pumps, visible cracks in housings, persistent bad taste or odor after filter changes, and anything involving hard piping changes or cutting into copper, PEX, or galvanized lines.

Who repairs water filtration systems in San Dimas varies. Many licensed plumbers handle straightforward filters and softeners. More complex reverse osmosis troubleshooting, mixed media tank work, or specialty contaminant systems are usually best handled by a dedicated water treatment company that works with these designs every day. Ideally, you want someone who can look at the whole picture: your San Dimas water chemistry, your plumbing layout, and your usage, not just the filter housing in front of them.

One question I hear often: "Can I change my water filter myself? How do I change a water filter cartridge without making a mess?" The key steps are always the same: shut off the water to the system, depressurize by opening a downstream faucet, place a towel or shallow tray under the housing, use the proper wrench or hand force to open it without twisting the entire assembly, swap the cartridge, check that the O ring is clean and lightly lubricated with silicone grease, then reassemble and turn the water on slowly while watching for leaks.

If at any point you feel unsure or you encounter stuck components, such as a filter housing that will not budge, do not force it. Removing a stuck water filter with excessive torque can twist pipes or crack housings, turning a basic maintenance task into a more expensive repair.

Matching the system to San Dimas water: getting it right from the start

A lot of recurring problems trace back to the system never being a good fit for the water and the household in the first place. When people ask "What is the best water filtration system for hard water?" the answer is rarely a single brand. It is a configuration that matches local hardness, chlorine levels, and your goals.

In San Dimas, that usually means recognizing that you are working with hard, chlorinated municipal water. A typical, reliable setup looks like this: a properly sized whole house sediment and carbon filter to protect plumbing and improve taste and odor, a metered softener adjusted to actual hardness if you want to reduce scale and improve soap performance, and a reverse osmosis system at the kitchen sink for drinking and cooking water.

From there, thoughtful maintenance keeps everything running: replacing filters on schedule, servicing the system annually, and keeping an eye on early signs of trouble such as changes in taste, flow, or noise. That is the quiet, unglamorous work that prevents bigger headaches later.

If your current system is slow, leaking, noisy, or simply not doing its job, the first step is to identify which of the ten common issues applies to you. Then decide, with realistic cost and lifespan in mind, whether you are better off fixing what you have or using the moment as an opportunity to put in something better suited to San Dimas water and to your home.

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