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#1 05-22-2011, 03:58 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Smelly hot water - help!

Hi all,

My wife, baby and I just came back from a 2 week trip and noticed that our hot water smells. The cold water is fine, but the hot water smells pretty nasty. My wife thinks it smells metallic, to me it reminds me of that stale smell that comes from a long dead dried mouse or the like.

Either way, it's pretty gross, and I'm not sure what's causing it. Now our water heater is an 8 y-wo out, is it trying to tell us that it wants to retire? Is the smelly water safe to bathe our 3-month old in?

Thanks!

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#2 05-22-2011, 05:19 PM

dj1
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Jul 2010
Location: SoCal
Posts: 7,760

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Assuming that you have a gas water heater, it sounds like a chemical build up inside the tank, specifically sulfides.

A quick remedy would be to replace the aluminum anode.

However, if you are about to replace the water heater, for whatever reason you have, it doesn't make sense to invest in it. Go ahead, replace it now.

As far as safety in bathing a baby: I won't bathe a baby in this water, why take a chance?

And never use hot water from the water heater for cooking.

Reply With Quote

#3 05-22-2011, 08:16 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Thanks for the response.

Sounds like I'll be calling a plumber to get our hot water heater replaced asap, since I don't want to go to long without bathing our infant!

With that being said, any suggestions on water heaters? Right now I'm looking at the Kenmore Power Miser line-hi (40 gallons), either 9 or 12 year warranties. I think they come with magnesium anodes?

Last edited by MBeach; 05-22-2011 at 08:20 PM.

Reply With Quote

#4 05-22-2011, 08:31 PM

dj1
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Jul 2010
Location: SoCal
Posts: 7,760

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

I don't know how old your water heater is, but if you are going to replace it, there are a few more items that your plumber should look at:

1. REPLACE the hot and cold flex supply lines, if any.
2. REPLACE the shut off valve to the cold side.
3. INSPECT the gas shut off valve and gas line. If damaged, replace.
4. INSPECT the vent.
5. If you are in an earthquake country, install safety straps.
6. If it is located in the garage, a gas heater must be elevated off the floor.
7. The temperature and pressure relief valve has to have a 3/4" copper pipe to the outside of the house.

Tell him about these, then check that he did what you expected him to do.

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#5 05-22-2011, 10:28 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

> Originally Posted by dj1
> *I don't know how old your water heater is, but if you are going to replace it, there are a few more items that your plumber should look at:*
>
> *1. REPLACE the hot and cold flex supply lines, if any.*
> *2. REPLACE the shut off valve to the cold side.*
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> *4. INSPECT the vent.*
> *5. If you are in an earthquake country, install safety straps.*
> *6. If it is located in the garage, a gas heater must be elevated off the floor.*
> *7. The temperature and pressure relief valve has to have a 3/4" copper pipe to the outside of the house.*
>
> *Tell him about these, then check that he did what you expected him to do.*

I'll be sure to have this list set up for him - thank you so much for the details.

The hot water heater is from 1996. I just took a look at it and it's got some pretty heavy looking wear on it. When we bought our place a little over a year ago, the home inspector said it was close to it's end. If you'd like, I'd be happy to share a few pics here.

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#6 05-22-2011, 10:35 PM

Gizmo
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Sep 2009
Location: florida
Posts: 598

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

By any chance do you have a well ????

Gizmo

Cut 3 3 times & it's still to short.
Inventor of the Miser Heater Plus.

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#7 05-22-2011, 10:40 PM

HoustonRomodeler
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Dec 2010
Location: Houston Texas
Posts: 3,201

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Many hot water heaters that set for long period without use start to get a rotten egg smell. Contrary to common sense, water filters make this odor worse.

The hydrogen ions are attacking the anode, making hydrogen sulfide gas..... you get the picture.

There is an easy fix I discovered on line when a renter was serving in the military. Add about a quart of common bleach to the hot water tank. It will dissolve all the nasty bits. Flush out the tank, repeat the process if you want, and you'll be good to go. My renter has been back for 3 years with the same anode tank and no problems.

All you need to know and more from the state of Minnesota http://www.nrwa.com/waterwise/frottenegg.htm

This link has all the instructions for adding the bleach http://www.clearwaterstore.com/water-heater-odors.html

Note that all sites recommend replacing the anodes. If you tank is of sufficient age and you can afford it, replace the tank.

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#8 05-22-2011, 10:57 PM

Gizmo
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Sep 2009
Location: florida
Posts: 598

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

The smell in your hot water likely comes from bacteria in the tank. Drain some water from the tank and then through the cold water input port. Add some hydrogen peroxide. Close up the system and then run some water from each tap and outlet (washing machine, dishwasher, etc.). The peroxide should kill the bacteria and eliminate the rotten smell. Keeping the water temperature above 150 degrees should ensure no bacteria can grow, but if you have small children or elderly people in the home, this may not be a viable option due to the risk of scalding.

Gizmo

Cut 3 3 times & it's still to short.
Inventor of the Miser Heater Plus.

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#9 05-23-2011, 03:04 AM

dj1
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Jul 2010
Location: SoCal
Posts: 7,760

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

MBeach,
Installed in 1996? No need to see a photo.
Dump it. You've got a lot of miles out this water heater.

Last edited by MBeach; 05-23-2011 at 03:47 PM.

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#10 05-23-2011, 02:20 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Thanks Houston, Gizmo, I had no idea that you could flush/treat/maintain a water heater. That's part of the beauty of this forum, I'm always learning! I just spent some time reading up on water heaters, very interesting.

My water heater is pretty much shot, I think I've got to replace it. I'm about to order a new heater - I'm open to your thoughts/feedback on the Kenmore 40gal natural gas 12 year water heater (model #153114).

Thanks!

Last edited by MBeach; 05-23-2011 at 02:47 PM.

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#11 05-23-2011, 04:58 PM

johnjhn2o
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Feb 2010
Location: SouthYard
Posts: 1,257

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

The 6 year and 12 year are the same tank. All you are paying extra for is a extended warranty. If the heater fails before the end of the warranty you will have to pay the labor charge to have it replaced, which is about half the price to have a new one supplied and installed. If it is a Sears heater you will also have to pay them a service charge to come out and inspect the heater before they will give you a replacement.

John

Last edited by johnjhn2o; 05-23-2011 at 05:00 PM.

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#12 05-24-2011, 08:48 AM

dj1
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Jul 2010
Location: SoCal
Posts: 7,760

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Cleaning the water heater tank will prolong the life of the heater, if done periodically, from the time the heater was new. However, a heater can't be flushed for the first time after 16 years. The drain is probably plugged, due to sediments, minerals, rust and other junk.

BTW, have you replaced your heater already?

Last edited by dj1; 05-24-2011 at 08:50 AM.

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#13 05-24-2011, 04:45 AM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

We ordered the 12 year Kenmore Power Miser, it's set to be delivered this Friday. It'll be installed this upcoming Tuesday. We're pretty excited to have the new water heater up and running next week!

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#14 06-06-2011, 07:17 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Thanks for the tips/feedback everyone. Our new hot water heater has been installed and is running beautifully. The foul smell is gone, which is great.

Our plumber replaced a couple pipes that were galvanized, and showed me just how blocked they were...it was pretty amazing. With the new pipes our hot water pressure is significantly stronger, which is a huge plus.

Thanks again everyone!

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#15 06-06-2011, 10:23 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Has it really only been ten days since I last posted? It seems like much longer than that!

I've had a few developments since then, and I wanted to run them by you to get your thoughts before I talk to the plumber I'm working with who installed the hot water heater. For the sake of this post I'll refer using my initials "CwH". I have to add that I've been working with CwH for over a year now, and he's always been helpful, friendly, and done great jobs.

Perhaps a week after our new water heater had been installed, I thought I near a knocking sound coming from it. Our heater is installed outside our house, almost directly outside of our guest bathroom. It is enclosed in a small metal "shed" that gives the heater perhaps 4-6" of space on all sides. The "roof" of the shed is higher, and has a hallow vent that travels up the side of our home and ends slightly above our roof line.

Following the knocking sound, I went out to examine the heater. This was the first time I'd looked at it since it was installed. First, I noticed that the front door of the shed, that typically slides out of it's enclosure to offer up access, had been affixed to the frame with two screws. I grabbed a screwdriver and unscrewed the door. I had no idea why these had been added, as the sliding door has always been a challenge to remove.

Regardless, I popped off the door and noticed three things immediately that seemed odd:

1. The tube that comes out of the top of the heater is not connected to the tub/vent that travels up the side of our home. There is a large gap (inches) between them. Is this correct?
2. There are water stains in two places already - one is on top of the heater where the hot water pipe is attached, the second is a thin rust-colored trickle that is coming from some sort of spigot looking item high up on the side of the heater. Should there be any moisture or moisture-residue present?
3. There are two good-sized dents in the heater. When the heater was delivered to it's box, the box was in immaculate condition. I've no clue if the dents occurred somewhere the interior of the heater, but one of the dents is large enough that it's pulled the outer metal of the heater away from the base ring at the bottom of the heater.

I called CwH to let him know I'd opened the heater and saw some moisture, and he's going to come back to look at it. What are your thoughts on the tube connection and the dents?

Thank you!

Reply With Quote

#16 06-16-2011, 04:41 PM

johnjhn2o
Senior Member
Rank 2

Join Date: Feb 2010
Location: SouthYard
Posts: 1,257

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

First if the heater is installed in a small shed I hope it has some type of louvers to allow combustion air into the shed. The dents on the outer jacket, if small shouldn't have no effect on the heater. If you had seen it before it was installed Sears would have given you the option to keep the heater at a discounted price or return it for another. At one time we did installs for Sears that's how I know how they operate. As far as the stains and or leaks a picture would be helpful.

John

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#17 06-16-2011, 08:10 PM

MBeach
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2010
Posts: 89

Re: Smelly hot water - help!

Here are some pictures with the descriptions included.