

Feltner Sewer & Drain Reveals Hidden Water Heater Issues Linked to Anode Rod Wear

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Feltner Sewer & Drain, a family-owned plumbing company serving southeast Wisconsin, highlights depleted anode rods as a potential source of hidden water heater issues in steel storage tanks. More visible problems homeowners encounter include water heater shutoffs and a sudden loss of hot water. Angi, a home services marketplace, reports that anode rods often wear out long before the appliances they protect reach the end of their service life. The explanation comes as colder weather begins across the region.

A. O. Smith, a water heater manufacturer, describes sacrificial anode rods made from aluminum, magnesium, or zinc as protection against corrosion in steel storage tanks. Angi explains that as the rod erodes, it releases electrons into the tank, which helps slow or prevent corrosion. Because the rod is designed to wear away over time, its condition affects how much protection the tank has.

Local water chemistry is one reason anode rod life varies between households. Milwaukee Water Works classifies Milwaukee's water as moderately hard, at 8.01 grains per gallon, or 137 milligrams per liter, with a

range of 112 to 142 milligrams per liter, and notes that water softeners are not necessary for residential use. Kenosha's 2023 water quality report lists total hardness for its Lake Michigan supply at 139 parts per million, with a range of 134 to 146.

Each figure applies only to the utility that reported it, and other communities in the company's service area report hardness readings from their own water utilities. A. O. Smith states that how long an anode rod lasts depends on the chemicals in the water, how much hot water is used, and whether a water softener is installed. Because these factors differ between households, the rod's condition can vary even between two tanks of the same age.

Feltner Sewer & Drain notes that colder temperatures can increase a water heater?s workload and may contribute to shutdowns in some systems. Its guidance also estimates a typical tank lifespan of eight to 12 years, though repairs may be needed sooner. A seasonal inspection offers an opportunity to assess operating condition alongside anode wear, addressing heating performance and corrosion protection during the same visit.

Anode rod wear is one of the hidden water heater issues that require direct inspection because the component sits inside the tank. Angi describes comparing hot and cold water samples for signs of rust and sediment as one way to tell whether a tank may be beginning to corrode. Discoloration can also come from household piping, so a professional assessment helps determine whether the heater is responsible.

A. O. Smith recommends inspecting the anode rod once a year to extend the life of a water heater. Angi advises that replacing the rod is generally not a do-it-yourself job because removal requires special tools and ample overhead clearance, and it is easy to damage the new rod. Angi also recommends replacing the rod quickly when it fails. Feltner Sewer & Drain advises scheduling maintenance at least once a year to flush sediment, check the anode rod, and inspect for wear. It describes regular inspections as a way to maintain efficiency and identify early signs of trouble.

The Blanton family has owned and operated Feltner Sewer & Drain since 1996. The company serves homeowners throughout southeast Wisconsin, providing plumbing repairs and maintenance, along with sewer and drain services. Its team also installs and repairs gas lines.

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For more information about Feltner's Sewer & Drain Services, contact the company here:Feltner's Sewer & Drain ServicesSteve Feltner+14147717111info@feltnersewerdraininc.comMilwaukee, WI 53202, United States

Feltner's Sewer & Drain Services

Feltner Sewer & Drain is a family-owned, 24/7 plumbing and drain cleaning company serving southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

Website: https://feltnersewerdraininc.com/

Email: info@feltnersewerdraininc.com

Phone: +14147717111