San Dimas sits in a part of Los Angeles County where the water quality is technically safe, but rarely anyone's idea of perfect. Hard water, chlorine, and seasonal changes in taste push many homeowners toward under sink filters, whole house systems, reverse osmosis units, or a mix of all three.

If you already have a water filtration system and it starts acting up, the frustration is real. Low flow, leaks under the sink, water that still tastes off, or a reverse osmosis faucet that suddenly runs dry can feel like one more demanding appliance in the house.

This guide walks through the most common water filter problems I see in San Dimas homes, why they happen, what you can safely handle yourself, and when to call a professional.

How San Dimas Water Shapes Your Filtration Problems

Before diving into failures and fixes, it helps to understand the water coming into your home. Many of the recurring issues are not random; they are reactions to what is in San Dimas tap water.

Who provides water in San Dimas and what is in it?

San Dimas water is primarily supplied by local agencies such as the City of San Dimas (which purchases from regional wholesalers), Golden State Water Company in some service areas, and nearby districts that blend local groundwater with imported surface water. The specifics vary by neighborhood, but a few patterns are consistent:

- Hardness is typically on the high side, often in the "hard" to "very hard" range. That means elevated calcium and magnesium, which cause scale on fixtures and can quickly clog certain filters and membranes.
- Disinfection usually relies on chlorine or chloramine to keep water microbiologically safe as it travels through pipes.
- Overall quality is regulated under federal and state standards, so San Dimas water is generally safe to drink from a health perspective for most people. That does not mean it tastes great.

If you have ever noticed a chemical smell, mineral buildup on glass shower doors, or dry skin, you have already met the main culprits your water filter is working against.

Is San Dimas water safe to drink?

Based on published water quality reports from local water providers in this part of California, the tap water typically meets state and federal safety standards. So for most healthy adults, it is considered safe to drink.

However, standard compliance reports do not address personal preferences about taste, odor, or sensitivity to chlorine. They also do not remove your concern if you simply prefer an extra layer of protection at the tap. That is where point of use and whole house filtration systems come in.

What is a water filtration system, and how does it actually work?

If you are trying to troubleshoot a problem, it helps to understand how your system is supposed to behave when it is healthy.

At its simplest, a water filtration system is a series of components that remove unwanted substances from water. Those substances can be physical particles, dissolved chemicals, or minerals that cause hardness. Different technologies target different issues.

Here is how a typical setup works in San Dimas homes:

1. A whole house sediment or carbon filter at the main line catches sand, rust, and sometimes chlorine before water distributes to showers, faucets, and appliances.
2. A water softener, if installed, swaps hardness minerals (calcium and magnesium) with sodium or potassium, which reduces scale.
3. Under the kitchen sink, a dedicated drinking water system, often either a carbon block filter or a reverse osmosis (RO) unit, polishes the water further for taste and purity.

So when you ask, "How does a water filtration system work?" the real answer depends on which type you mean:

- Sediment filters strain out larger particles.
- Carbon filters adsorb chlorine, many organic compounds, and improve taste and odor.
- Reverse osmosis systems push water through a semi permeable membrane that rejects a wide range of dissolved solids.
- Softeners use ion exchange to treat hardness.

Every component has a lifespan. Every filter adds some resistance to flow. If you understand that, a lot of common symptoms make more sense.

The most common water filter problems in San Dimas homes

Over the years, I tend to see the same complaints repeat. Different brands, same symptoms. Let's break down the main ones, why they happen, and practical next steps.

1. "Why is my water filtration system not working at all?"

When a homeowner says the system is "not working," they usually mean one of three things: no water is coming out, the system is extremely slow, or the taste and odor are no longer improved.

Common causes when there is no water coming out of a water filter:

- The cartridge or RO membrane is completely clogged, often from hard water scale, sediment, or simply expired filter media.
- A shutoff valve near the filter is partially or fully closed.
- The inlet or outlet tubing is kinked or pinched, especially in under sink installations.
- For RO systems, the tank may be empty, the auto shutoff valve may be stuck, or the feed to the membrane may be blocked.

A quick mental checklist can help you separate a major failure from something simple.

Short diagnostic list 1: When no or very little water comes out of the filtered faucet

1. Confirm the main cold water valve under the sink and any small shutoff valves to the filter are fully open.
2. Inspect visible tubing for sharp bends or kinks. Straighten them gently.
3. If it is an RO system, lift the tank to feel if it is heavy (full) or very light (empty). A full tank with no flow suggests a failed faucet or blockage after the tank.
4. Check the filter change dates. If it has been more than 6 to 12 months for carbon filters, or 2 to 5 years for RO membranes (depending on water quality and usage), a clog is likely.

5. If everything looks open and recently replaced, the problem may be in internal valves or the manifold, which is usually a job for a professional.

A system that no longer improves taste but still flows well often has spent carbon filters. That is one of the clearest signs of a bad water filtration system: the water starts to taste or smell like plain tap again.

2. "Why is my water filtration system slow?"

Slower than normal flow is a classic sign of a filter nearing the end of its useful life or being overworked by hard water and sediment.

Causes often include:

- Clogged sediment prefilters.
- Carbon filters that have trapped as much as they can and are plugging up.
- Reverse osmosis tanks that have lost air pressure, resulting in weak delivery from the faucet even though the tank contains water.
- An undersized system trying to serve multiple fixtures.

For RO systems, a simple at home test is to turn on the RO faucet and watch how long the strong initial stream lasts. If it drops off quickly to a trickle, the tank bladder pressure may be low or the tank could be failing. A technician can check and repressurize the tank if it is still structurally sound.

3. "Why is my water filter leaking?"

Leaks around whole house filters, under sink housings, or RO systems are among the most stressful problems because they threaten cabinets and flooring.

Leaks usually trace back to one of a few issues:

- O rings that are dirty, dry, cracked, or missing. A single misaligned O ring on a housing can cause a persistent drip.
- Housings that were not tightened evenly after a cartridge change. Over tightening can be as bad as under tightening, since it can deform the O ring.
- Cracked housings from age, manufacturing defects, or freezing (more on freezing later).
- Push to connect fittings where tubing was not fully seated or has been pulled slightly loose.

If you are wondering how to find a leak in your water filtration system, the best approach is methodical. Dry all visible components with a towel, then wrap paper towels around each connection or joint. Turn the system back on and watch where the first damp spot appears. That tells you which specific connection is failing.

If the leak is minor and clearly from a housing O ring, many homeowners can safely shut off the water, relieve pressure, open the housing, clean or replace the O ring, lubricate it with food grade silicone grease, and reinstall. If the housing itself is cracked or the leak is at a soldered or glued connection in a whole house system, bring in a plumber or filtration specialist.

4. "Why does my filtered water taste bad or smell strange?"

Taste and odor complaints are often what drive the first call. A homeowner trusts their filter, then one day notices a musty, metallic, or chlorinated taste creeping back in.

Reasons why your filtered water might taste bad:

- Carbon filters are exhausted and no longer removing chlorine and organic compounds.
- Biofilm has developed in filters that were left in place far too long, particularly in low use fixtures.
- For RO systems, the post carbon “polishing” filter is past its lifespan.
- The local water provider has changed source water or treatment temporarily, affecting baseline taste and chemistry.

If your water filter is not removing chlorine anymore, the carbon stage is almost certainly due for replacement. Most manufacturers recommend 6 to 12 months for standard residential cartridges with typical usage. In San Dimas, with higher chlorine and hard water, leaning toward the short end of that range is usually wise.

A milky or metallic taste from a brand new system can come from manufacturing residues or air in the lines. Flushing several gallons before regular use typically resolves that.

5. “Why is my filtered water cloudy?”

Cloudy water out of a freshly serviced system often looks alarming, but the cause is usually harmless.

Tiny air bubbles can dissolve in pressurized water in the lines and tank. When water exits the faucet and pressure drops, those microbubbles come out of solution and give a cloudy or milky appearance. You can test this by filling a clear glass and letting it sit. If the cloudiness rises from the bottom and clears within a minute or two, you are seeing air, not contamination.

Cloudiness that does not dissipate, however, can signal:

- Very fine particulate matter getting through a worn sediment filter.
- A deteriorating carbon filter that is shedding fines.
- High levels of dissolved solids in RO reject water accidentally crossing into the product water stream because of a damaged membrane or misplumbed system.

Any persistent cloudiness combined with grit in the glass or an unusual taste merits a filter change and possibly a service visit.

6. “Why is my water still hard after filtration?”

This is a common misunderstanding. Most whole house water filters and under sink drinking systems do not soften water. They may slightly reduce scale by reducing some minerals and changing water chemistry, but if the core technology is carbon or basic sediment filtration, hardness minerals will largely remain.

If you are asking, “What is the best water filtration system for hard water in San Dimas?” the honest answer is that it Water Filtration Repair San Dimas is not a simple carbon filter at all, but rather a dedicated water softener or a well designed conditioning system paired with filtration.

When a softener is installed but you still have hard water:

- The softener may have run out of salt.
- The bypass valve may be open, sending water around the softener.
- The control valve might not be regenerating on schedule.
- Hard water scale may have fouled the resin bed beyond simple regeneration.

A softener “not working” in combination with a filter can also cause low flow, clogging, and inconsistent taste. Softener and filter systems need to be sized and set up to work together, not fight each other.

7. “Why is my water filter making a noise?”

Most filters should operate quietly. Common noises include hissing, rattling, or a knocking sound in the pipes when a faucet is turned on.

Likely causes:

- A small amount of air trapped in lines or filters, particularly after a recent cartridge change.
- Water hammer from sudden valve closures or pressure changes.
- Loose mounting brackets on under sink or wall mounted filter housings, which allow them to vibrate.
- In RO systems, the gurgling sound of reject water going down the drain is normal, but loud, irregular noise can point to a blocked drain saddle or improperly sloped drain line.

Air usually clears on its own after some usage. Persistent knocking or vibration in whole house filters should be inspected, especially if you see movement in exposed pipes.

8. Reverse osmosis systems: “Why is my RO system not producing water?”

Reverse osmosis systems are fantastic for polishing San Dimas water, especially for drinking and cooking, but they are also more complex than a simple carbon filter. That creates more potential failure points.

Common reasons a reverse osmosis system is not producing water or producing very little:

- Incoming water pressure is too low. RO needs a minimum feed pressure, often around 40 to 50 psi. Below that, production drops sharply.
- Prefilters are clogged, starving the membrane of feed water.
- The RO membrane is fouled with scale or sediment, particularly in hard water areas without proper pre treatment.
- The auto shutoff valve has failed, so the system is not cycling properly.
- The tank bladder has lost its air charge.

Short diagnostic list 2: If your RO faucet has almost no flow

1. Confirm full flow at the cold kitchen faucet. If that is also weak, the problem is upstream of the RO system.
2. Check the RO tank weight. A heavy tank with no flow suggests a faucet or post filter restriction. A very light tank with no flow often points to feed or membrane problems.
3. Note the age of prefilters (usually 6 to 12 months) and the RO membrane (often 2 to 5 years in this region). If you are outside these ranges, replacing them is an inexpensive first step.
4. Listen for continuous water going down the RO drain line even when the tank is full. That may indicate a stuck auto shutoff valve.
5. If problems persist after new filters, have a technician test the incoming pressure, tank pressure, and membrane performance.

Learning how to repair a reverse osmosis system safely comes down to knowing where DIY ends and professional service begins. Homeowners can usually manage filter and membrane changes if the manufacturer’s instructions are clear. Diagnosing valve failures, pressure issues, or leaks in tight spaces is often best handled by someone who repairs water filtration systems for a living.

Filter life, service intervals, and when to replace the whole system

Some of the worst filter problems I see in San Dimas are not from product defects. They result from filters that were left in place until they were far past their design life.

How often should water filters be replaced?

There is no universal number, but there are reasonable ranges:

- Sediment prefilters: about every 3 to 6 months, depending on visible discoloration and pressure drop.
- Carbon block filters in whole house or under sink systems: about every 6 to 12 months under normal household use. In heavily chlorinated or high usage homes, closer to 6 months.
- Reverse osmosis prefilters (sediment and carbon): usually 6 to 12 months.
- Reverse osmosis membranes: often 2 to 5 years, depending on water hardness, usage, and prefiltration quality.
- RO post carbon “polishing” filters: about every 12 months.

If you want to know how do I know if my water filter is bad aside from timelines, look for a combination of symptoms: taste drifting back toward raw tap, slower flow, odors when water first comes out, or visible discoloration of a clear sediment filter.

How often should a water filtration system be serviced?

Beyond simple cartridge replacement, a full system check is valuable every 12 to 24 months. A professional service visit typically includes:

- Inspecting housings, O rings, and fittings.
- Checking for small leaks and moisture in cabinets.
- Verifying water pressure before and after the filter to detect restrictions.
- Testing RO tank pressure and membrane performance.
- Inspecting softener settings and regeneration cycles if present.

Regular service is much cheaper than repairing water damage from a slow, undetected leak.

How long do water filtration systems last, and when should you replace them?

The filters are consumables, but the system itself has a lifespan. Housings, manifolds, tanks, and valves do not last forever.

In my experience:

- Basic under sink carbon systems can last 5 to 10 years with proper maintenance.
- Quality reverse osmosis systems often last 10 to 15 years before parts availability or accumulated wear make replacement more practical.
- Whole house filter housings and head assemblies can last a decade or more, but plastic can fatigue, and metal components can corrode.

If you are asking when should I replace my water filtration system, look at:

- Age beyond 10 to 15 years.
- Repeated leaks or cracks in housings.
- Obsolete parts that are difficult to source.

- A change in your water quality needs, such as adding a softener or upgrading to better contaminant removal.

Sometimes it is cheaper long term to install a modern, efficient system rather than continue to repair an older, problematic one.

Repair vs replacement: what does it cost, and is it worth it?

This is one of the first questions homeowners ask, right after “How much does a water filtration system cost?”

What does a system cost in this area?

Broadly speaking in a market like San Dimas:

- Simple under sink carbon systems might cost in the low hundreds of dollars installed, depending on brand and capacity.
- Reverse osmosis systems can range from the mid hundreds to over a thousand dollars with higher end units or complex installs.
- Whole house cartridge filters typically land in the few hundred to low thousand dollar range installed, especially if new plumbing runs are required.
- Traditional water softeners usually cost more, often in the low thousands installed, depending on size and control features.

Filter replacement costs vary, but standard carbon cartridges might run from tens to low hundreds of dollars per year, and RO membranes somewhat more frequently every few years.

How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system, and is it worth it?

Repair costs are highly situation specific, but there are some patterns:

- Minor repairs such as O ring replacement, faucet changes, or fixing a small leak near a fitting can be relatively inexpensive, especially if addressed early.
- Diagnosing and fixing complex RO issues, replacing tanks, or repairing whole house filter manifolds involves more labor and can approach the cost of a new system if the unit is old.
- When a plastic manifold on an older under sink system cracks, parts may be unavailable, making replacement the only realistic choice.

The question “Is it worth repairing a water filtration system?” hinges mostly on age and availability of parts. For a system under 7 to 10 years old with good parts support, repairs are usually worth it. For a system older than that, especially if you have had repeated service calls in a short span, replacement is often more cost effective.

“Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?” does not have a blanket answer, but a seasoned technician should be able to give you a candid comparison once they see your setup.

DIY vs professional help: what you can safely handle

A lot of San Dimas homeowners like to tackle projects themselves. That can work well with many filtration tasks, as long as you know your limits.

Can I repair my water filtration system myself?

Some tasks are reasonable for a careful homeowner with basic tools:

- Changing sediment and carbon filter cartridges.
- Changing RO prefilters and post filters, following the manufacturer’s directions.
- Cleaning and lubricating O rings.
- Resetting electronic filter change indicators on certain systems.
- Turning a bypass valve to isolate a problem unit temporarily.

Learning how do I change a water filter cartridge from the manual is important, because each system has small quirks: which direction cartridges insert, how much to tighten housings, and how to flush new filters.

Complex jobs such as cutting and rejoining copper or PEX lines, rerouting drains, replacing cracked housings, or diagnosing low feed pressure are better for professionals.

Do I need a plumber for water filter repair, or a filtration specialist?

It depends on the problem and the equipment.

You generally want:

- A plumber if the issue involves the main water line, shutoff valves, whole house filters tied into rigid plumbing, or leaks that are damaging structure.
- A water treatment or filtration specialist if the issue is mainly inside the filter system, such as RO tank issues, membrane failures, funky taste with no leaks, or complex softener programming.

Some plumbing companies in the San Dimas area handle both, and some water treatment companies have licensed plumbers on staff. When you call, be specific about your symptoms so they can send the right person.

A brief word about freezing, stuck filters, and weird edge cases

San Dimas does not experience severe winters, but garages and exterior installs can still dip near freezing.

Can a water filter system freeze and break?

Yes. Any filter housing or RO unit installed in a garage, crawlspace, or on an exterior wall without insulation can freeze on particularly cold nights. When water freezes, it expands and can crack housings, fittings, and even valves.

If you have an outdoor or garage mounted system, ask your installer if it is rated for that location and what freeze protection, if any, is in place. In borderline conditions, even a simple insulating cover or relocating the system to a less exposed area can prevent expensive damage.

How do you remove a stuck water filter?

Stuck housings are common, particularly on whole house units:

- Use the filter wrench provided with the system, and make sure you are turning in the correct direction.
- Gently tap the housing with the palm of your hand near the threads to help break the seal.
- Relieve pressure completely before trying again. A pressurized housing will be much harder to open.
- If the plastic wrench is flexing heavily, stop before it breaks. A professional can use a better designed strap wrench or other methods to remove it without cracking the housing.

Under sink twist lock cartridges that will not budge often need a specific release motion described in the manual. Forcing them can break the mount.

Simple maintenance habits that prevent most problems

Most San Dimas water filter failures I see could have been prevented or softened with three simple habits: paying attention to flow and taste, respecting manufacturer lifespans, and inspecting for leaks.

Here is a compact maintenance rhythm that works well for many homes:

1. Every month, glance under the sink or at your whole house unit for moisture, rust, or white mineral trails that hint at slow leaks.
2. Every 3 to 6 months, check your sediment filter, softener salt level if you have one, and any prefilter cartridges. Replace as needed, not just when they clog completely.
3. Every 6 to 12 months, replace carbon filters and RO prefilters, and write the date directly on the new cartridge with a marker.
4. Every 12 months, replace the RO polishing filter and consider having a professional service visit, especially if you have a more complex setup.
5. Every few years, test your water before and after the system. Compare total dissolved solids, hardness, and taste so you know your system is still delivering what you bought it for.

These small actions protect your investment far more effectively than waiting for a dramatic failure.

Final thoughts: matching expectations to reality

San Dimas tap water starts reasonably safe, but it arrives with enough hardness, chlorine, and variability that a well designed filtration and softening strategy can make a big difference in comfort and appliance life.

When something goes wrong with your water filtration system, almost every symptom has a logical cause: clogs from hard water, exhausted filters, pressure loss, air in the lines, or components aging out. Understanding those patterns lets you answer questions like:

- Why is my water filtration system slow?
- Why is my water filter leaking?
- Why is my water still hard after filtration?
- Why does my filtered water taste bad?

On your own, at least to the level of deciding whether this is a quick filter swap or a job for a professional.

If you are ever in doubt, shut off the water to the system, relieve pressure, and call someone who works with these systems every day. A short service visit generally costs far less than cabinets swollen from a hidden leak or months of drinking water that is not being filtered the way you think it is.

Alpine Plumbing, Heating, and Air
462 Borrego Ct, San Dimas, CA 91773
6266081032