If you live in San Dimas long enough, you get used to two things: summer heat and hard water. That hardness, along with seasonal changes in source water and aging plumbing, is exactly why so many homeowners invest in filtration and softening equipment.

At some point, though, even the best system reaches the end of its useful life. Knowing when to repair and when to replace affects water quality, home comfort, and your budget.

This guide looks specifically at San Dimas conditions and walks through seven clear signs that your water filtration system is ready to retire, plus what to do about it.

What is a water filtration system, really?

Before talking about replacement, it helps to clarify what we mean when we say "water filtration system."

In homes around San Dimas, that usually means one of three setups:

1. A whole house water filter on the main line, sometimes paired with a water softener.
2. An under sink drinking water system, commonly reverse osmosis (RO).
3. Point of use filters on fridges or faucets, often carbon cartridges.

A water filtration system is any combination of equipment that removes or reduces unwanted substances in your tap water. Those can include:

- Sediment and rust from old mains and galvanized piping.
- Chlorine and chloramine used by water providers for disinfection.
- Hardness minerals like calcium and magnesium.
- Dissolved solids that affect taste, like sulfate or certain metals.

How does a water filtration system work?

Different systems tackle different issues.

A basic cartridge filter forces water through a physical barrier that traps particles. A carbon filter uses adsorption, where chlorine and many organic compounds stick to the surface of activated carbon. A reverse osmosis system uses a semi permeable membrane that allows water molecules through while rejecting most dissolved salts and contaminants. A water softener uses ion exchange resin to swap hardness minerals for sodium or potassium.

In San Dimas, it is common to see a combination: a sediment pre filter, then carbon for chlorine, then either a softener for hardness or an RO system for drinking water. Understanding what you have helps you interpret the signs that follow.

San Dimas water basics: what you are starting with

Water in San Dimas is supplied by several agencies, including the City of San Dimas, Golden State Water Company, Covina Irrigating Company, and others in smaller pockets. Much of the supply is imported surface water blended with local groundwater.

Three points matter for your filtration system:

1. Hardness. San Dimas water is typically in the hard to very hard range. That causes scale buildup in heaters, fixtures, and filtration equipment. It also explains why your water might still feel “not quite right” even if you installed a simple carbon filter.
2. Disinfectant. Most local providers use chlorine or chloramine. These are effective for safety but can give water a swimming pool smell or flat taste if not filtered.
3. Seasonality. Water sources and blends shift throughout the year. That can change taste, odor, and even the way your system behaves, especially if it was sized right on the edge.

So if you are wondering, “Is San Dimas water safe to drink?” the short answer is that local utilities treat and test it to meet state and federal standards. Many homeowners still choose added filtration because of taste, hardness, and specific sensitivities.

How long do water filtration systems last?

There are two different lifespans to think about:

Filters and membranes have a relatively short cycle. Whole house cartridge filters often last 3 to 12 months. Under sink carbon filters run 6 to 12 months. A reverse osmosis membrane typically lasts 2 to 5 years, depending on usage and hardness. A softener’s resin bed can last 10 to 20 years if maintained.

The system hardware has a much longer arc. Housings, tanks, valves, and manifolds usually last around 10 to 15 years. Well built systems, especially softeners and RO units maintained properly, can push past 15 to 20 years. Plastic budget systems under the sink can start cracking or leaking earlier, particularly when exposed to hot cabinet conditions or if they were installed under stress.

The question “How often should a water filtration system be serviced?” lands between those two timeframes. Most San Dimas homeowners do well with:

- Annual service on whole house systems and softeners, including checking settings, cleaning brine tanks, and replacing pre filters.
- Six to twelve month checks on under sink systems, with filter changes based on usage.

When you are on top of service and still have persistent problems, that is when replacement starts to make more sense than another repair.

Seven clear signs your filtration system should be replaced

You do not have to wait for a flood in the kitchen or a completely dry tap. Most systems give you warning. Here are seven signs that, in my experience, point strongly toward replacement rather than another patch.

1. Chronic performance problems, even after filter changes

If you find yourself asking, “Why is my water filtration system not working?” every few months, the issue may be deeper than a clogged cartridge. Typical performance complaints include:

- Water still smells like chlorine after filtration.
- Your water still feels hard, even though you have a softener or a “scale reducing” filter.
- Reverse osmosis water output keeps dropping, no matter how often you change pre filters.

At first, a system that is slowing down or letting more contaminants through may just need routine maintenance. But when those same issues come back shortly after service, several things might be happening:

The filtration media is exhausted. Softener resin loses capacity as it ages. RO membranes become less selective and let more dissolved solids pass. Carbon blocks lose adsorption sites. At some point, simply regenerating or flushing is not enough.

The system is undersized for your home. San Dimas households often add bathrooms, larger washers, and irrigation lines without upsizing filtration. High flow rates can overload older systems, especially whole house carbon filters that were designed around smaller usage.

Internal channels are fouled. Scale from very hard water can partially block resin tanks, RO housings, and valves. You can clean some of that, but on older equipment the cost and risk often outweigh the benefit.

Repeated “not quite right” water quality, especially when professional service only gives you brief relief, is one of the strongest signs it is time to consider replacement.

2. Persistent low water pressure or flow through the system

A slight drop in pressure as water passes through a filter is normal. The red flag is when you start asking, “What causes low water pressure after a water filter?” and the answer is “it is always the filter” even after you swap cartridges.

If your water filtration system is slow and remains that way after fresh filters and a full flush, the restriction may be structural. Common culprits include clogged internal passages, undersized piping, or valve assemblies that are simply worn out.

With reverse osmosis, an older membrane and a tired automatic shutoff valve can leave you wondering, “Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?” beyond a slow drip. At that stage, piecemeal repairs quickly approach the cost of a new unit.

As a rule of thumb, if you have addressed the simple reasons for low pressure, such as clogged cartridges and partially closed valves, and the system is more than about 10 years old, it is worth pricing a replacement.

3. Leaks that return after you “fix” them

A one time drip after changing a filter is usually installation related. A leak that keeps finding its way back, even after new O rings and careful re tightening, points to aging plastic or cracked housings.

Homeowners often ask, “Why is my water filter leaking?” and focus on the O ring. The better question is “Where exactly is the leak coming from?” If it is from:

- A seam in the filter housing.
- A hairline crack in the canister or head.
- A threaded port that has been over tightened a few times.

Then you are seeing the limits of the materials, not just a faulty seal. San Dimas garages and under sink cabinets can get quite hot in summer. That thermal cycling stresses older plastic, particularly on budget systems.

Trying to find every tiny leak in an old manifold or whole house housing is time consuming, and you never fully trust the system again. For many homeowners, that is the moment they decide a new unit is a better investment.

If you are asking, “How do I find a leak in my water filtration system?” a simple technique is to dry all visible surfaces, wrap suspect joints with tissue or paper towel, then slowly pressurize the system while watching closely. If you see moisture reappearing in multiple locations on an older unit, replacement is usually the smart move.

4. Filtered water tastes or looks worse than your tap

You install filtration to improve your water. When the opposite happens, it is a serious warning sign.

Common complaints include:

- “Why does my filtered water taste bad?”
- “Why is my filtered water cloudy?”

Cloudiness can simply be tiny air bubbles, especially right after service, which clear if you let the water sit. Past that, persistent haziness or floating particles point to internal problems. Carbon fines from disintegrating filters, resin beads from a damaged softener, or bacterial growth in stagnant housings all show up in the glass.

Bad taste can mean exhausted carbon, bacterial biofilm inside the system, or a reverse osmosis membrane that has lost rejection capacity so you are tasting more of the dissolved solids. When someone says, “Why is my water filter not removing chlorine anymore?” on a system older than a decade, the explanation is often that the carbon bed is spent or channeling.

Some issues can be fixed with a deep sanitization and replacement of all cartridges and membranes. If you have already done that in the last year and the off taste returns, you are dealing with an aging system whose internal surfaces are no longer in good shape. At that point, replacement provides both better water quality and peace of mind.

5. Your water is still hard after filtration

San Dimas residents talk about spots on dishes, scale in kettles, and stiff laundry regularly. So when someone asks, “Why is my water still hard after filtration?” it usually means one of two things.

Either you do not actually have a true softener, but instead a standard carbon or “salt free” system that does not remove hardness minerals, or your softener resin is worn out.

Softener resin has a finite capacity for ion exchange. Over years, high hardness, iron traces, and chlorine exposure break it down. You start to notice gradually harder water, soap that does not lather well, and more spotting despite the system still regenerating and using salt.

Technically, you can re bed a softener with new resin. In practice, by the time the resin is exhausted, the control valve is often old as well. If the softener is over 12 to 15 years old and your plumber has already been out for several repairs, you reach the question, “Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?” For softeners in that age range, replacement nearly always comes out ahead over a 5 year horizon.

If you do not have softening at all and are fed up with hardness, that is the time to ask, “What is the best water filtration system for hard water?” In San Dimas, a properly sized ion exchange softener, paired with good pre filtration, remains the most reliable way to truly remove hardness minerals.

6. Odd noises, frequent clogs, and constant babysitting

Mature filtration systems tend to behave quietly. When a homeowner starts asking, “Why is my water filter making a noise?”, “Why does my water filter keep clogging?”, or “Why is my water filtration system slow?” every few weeks, the underlying issue is usually age and mismatch to current usage.

Noises can come from valves cycling repeatedly, air getting trapped in housings, or pumps on RO systems straining to keep up. Frequent clogs often indicate that the system’s filter area is too small for the sediment load in your water, or that scale and debris have accumulated internally over years.

There is a pattern I see often in San Dimas: a small under sink unit that was fine when one or two people lived in the house now struggles with a family of five, fridge dispensers, and ice makers all tied in. You end up changing filters long before their rated capacity, babying the system, and still living with slow flow and occasional spurts of cloudy water.

At that point, the real question is less “How do I reset my water filtration system?” and more “Is this architecture still right for my life?” Upsizing to a modern unit, often with larger filter cartridges and higher flow membranes, solves chronic nuisance issues that piecemeal repairs never quite eliminate.

7. Age, cost of repairs, and obsolete parts

Every piece of mechanical equipment has a financial tipping point. With filtration systems, it shows up when you start asking:

- How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system?
- Is it worth repairing a water filtration system that old?
- Who repairs water filtration systems if the original installer is gone?

For rough context in the San Dimas area:

A service visit to diagnose and repair a residential filtration system often runs in the 150 to 350 dollar range, plus parts. A new under sink reverse osmosis system might cost 400 to 900 dollars installed, depending on quality and options. A whole house filtration and softening package usually ranges from about 2,000 dollars for a simple setup to 5,000 dollars and above for larger homes with premium valves and tanks.

If your system is more than about 10 to 12 years old, and a single repair quote is more than a third of the cost of a comparable new system, replacement usually makes better sense. That is especially true when parts are hard to

find, the manufacturer is no longer active, or you are dealing with repeated service calls.

Another subtle sign is compatibility. Older systems sometimes use proprietary cartridges. If you are starting to ask, “How do you remove a stuck water filter?” each time because the design is awkward or corroded, that is your time and frustration turning into hidden cost.

Repair, maintain, or replace: how to decide

There is no single rule that fits every home, but experience suggests a few practical guidelines for San Dimas homeowners.

If your system is under 7 years old, has no history of leaks, and your main complaint is slowed flow or taste change, a full maintenance service is usually the best first step. That means new cartridges, possibly a new RO membrane, sanitization, and checking all settings.

Between 7 and 12 years, it becomes more situational. A well built system with available parts can be worth repairing once or twice. But if you are looking at major components like control valves, tanks, or manifolds, start comparing numbers to new equipment.

Beyond 12 to 15 years, especially with plastic housings that have seen thousands of pressure cycles, replacement is often the safer and more economical Shower Valve Repair choice. That is also when efficiency improvements in new designs start to matter. Newer RO systems waste less water per gallon produced, and modern softeners can regenerate based on actual usage instead of a fixed timer.

DIY vs plumber: what can you safely handle yourself?

The range of questions I hear from homeowners goes from “Can I change my water filter myself?” to “Do I need a plumber for water filter repair?” and even “Can I repair my water filtration system myself?”

The short answer:

Most San Dimas homeowners can safely handle basic tasks such as changing cartridge filters, replacing fridge filters, and occasionally changing an RO membrane if they are comfortable shutting water off and following instructions.

Anything that involves cutting into main lines, relocating equipment, pressure testing after a major change, or diagnosing electrical components belongs with a professional. Whole house filters and softeners in particular sit in a critical spot. A poorly sealed housing or cross threaded fitting at that point can flood large portions of your home.

If you like hands on work, the middle ground is to let a plumber or filtration specialist handle the initial installation and any major repairs, then do routine filter changes and visual inspections yourself between annual services.

How to change a water filter cartridge correctly

Since cartridge changes are the most frequent maintenance task, it is worth describing the core steps clearly. The exact details vary by brand, but the general process for an under sink or whole house filter is similar.

Here is a simple sequence that works for most systems:

- Shut the system off using the inlet valve, and open a downstream faucet to relieve pressure.

- Use the provided filter wrench or your hands to unscrew the housing, keeping a towel or bucket nearby for drips.
- Remove the old cartridge, clean the housing with a mild dish soap solution, then rinse thoroughly.
- Lightly lubricate the O ring with food grade silicone if the manufacturer recommends it, set the new cartridge in place, and carefully reattach the housing without cross threading.
- Turn the water back on slowly, check for leaks, and flush the new filter according to the instructions, often several gallons, before drinking.

If the housing refuses to turn and you are wondering how to remove a stuck water filter, resist the urge to use extreme force with large metal wrenches. That is how housings crack. Gentle, steady pressure with the proper plastic wrench, combined with pressure relief and occasionally warming the housing slightly, is safer. When in doubt, call for help rather than risking a fractured canister.

Common RO and whole house problems that point to replacement

Reverse osmosis systems and whole house filters each have their own failure modes.

With RO, a common story starts with, “Why is no water coming out of my water filter?” or “Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?” After checking that the storage tank has pressure and replacing pre filters, the remaining suspects are the membrane, automatic shutoff valve, and sometimes the tank bladder. You can repair each part. But on a 10 year old RO unit, by the time you add up membrane, tank, valves, and labor, a modern system with better efficiency is typically a smarter investment.

Whole house filters and softeners show their age through repeated leaks, error codes that never quite clear, and resin tanks that have lost capacity. If you are asking, “How do you fix a whole house water filter?” and the answer from your tech involves replacing the main valve head or tank, push for a clear breakdown of costs and options. Often, that is the quiet way a contractor is telling you the system is at the end of its designed life.

A side note on weather: “Can a water filter system freeze and break?” Absolutely. In San Dimas, freeze damage is less common than in colder climates, but uninsulated units on exterior walls or in poorly protected garages can still be damaged during rare cold snaps. Cracked housings from past freezing are another reason replacement may be safer than attempted patching.

What about servicing schedules and staying ahead of problems?

Two questions come up regularly:

- How often should water filters be replaced?
- How often should a water filtration system be serviced?

For San Dimas conditions, a reasonable baseline is:

Under sink filters every 6 to 12 months, depending on taste and flow. RO membranes every 2 to 5 years. Whole house sediment filters every 3 to 6 months if you see visible sediment, yearly in lighter conditions. Carbon filters annually, or more often if chlorine taste returns quickly. A full system check once a year, either by you, following the manual, or by a professional.

Good maintenance is not just about stretching system life. It is also how you know whether a specific symptom means “time to replace a filter” or “time to replace the whole system.” If your log shows that you are changing filters properly and problems still persist, that is your signal.

Choosing a replacement system that fits San Dimas water

When you do reach the point of replacement, you face a fresh set of questions:

- How much does a water filtration system cost?
- What maintenance does a water filtration system need going forward?
- How do I increase water pressure on my filtration system without sacrificing quality?

There is no one size fits all answer, but a few principles help.

First, match the system to your actual water. San Dimas has hard water. If scale is a issue for you, build softening into the plan. A quality softener ahead of an RO unit also increases RO membrane life, so “How long does a reverse osmosis filter last?” becomes closer to the high end of that 2 to 5 year range.

Second, size for realistic flow. If you have multiple bathrooms and simultaneous showers, make sure the whole house system is sized to handle that flow without big pressure loss. That addresses low pressure complaints upfront, rather than trying to “increase water pressure on my filtration system” later with pumps or workarounds.

Third, consider ownership costs, not just sticker price. A system with proprietary cartridges that cost a lot and need frequent replacement may be more expensive over 5 to 10 years than a slightly pricier system that uses standard, larger cartridges changed less often.

Finally, keep service in mind. Choose equipment that local plumbers and water treatment specialists are familiar with. That way, when you inevitably need help, you are not stuck searching for “Who repairs water filtration systems for this brand?” on a stressful afternoon.

Owning a water filtration system in San Dimas is not a set it and forget it proposition. You are dealing with hard water, shifting source blends, and the realities of aging mechanical equipment. If you pay attention to the seven signs above and weigh repair costs against age and performance, you can time your replacement before it becomes an emergency and keep your home’s water clean, comfortable, and predictable.

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