

## Boil water **Advisories** Frequently Asked Questions:

**What is a Boil Water Advisory?** Whenever a water system has a significant pressure loss or a confirmed total coliform bacteria test result, as a precaution, customers are advised to boil water to insure its safety until testing can confirm it's safe to use. While there's been no confirmation of contamination, this advisory is a recommended precaution.

**What are total coliform bacteria?** Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially-harmful, bacteria may be present. Usually, coliforms are a sign that there could be a problem with the treatment or distribution of a water system (pipes). Whenever coliform bacteria are detected in any sample, we do follow-up testing to see if other bacteria of greater concern, such as fecal coliform or *E. coli*, are present.

## **Restaurants, Care Centers, Local Confinement, Residential cares, Institutions:**

**Should I be using ice from my ice machine?** It is recommended to use ice from an alternate source. Meaning ice purchased from a vendor that is not in the affected area of the boil water advisory.

**Can I still use my dish machine or hand wash my utensils in my three compartment sink set up?**

There are a couple of recommendations for utensil washing during a boil water advisory such as:

- Switch to paper/single service utensils during the advisory period
- Dish machines may be continued in use provided heat or chemical sanitizing is working at all times
- Hand washing utensils may be continued in use provided heat or chemical sanitizing is working at all times.
- Chemical sanitizing shall be maintained with Chlorine at 50-100ppm, Quaternary Ammonia 200-400ppm. Dish machines in accordance with data plate. Hand washing at least 2 minutes contact time for immersion
- Heat sanitizing:
  - For dish machine operations, cycles shall be in accordance with the data plate with the utensil surface reaching 160°F minimally
  - For hand dishwashing, the third compartment of the set up shall be at least 170°F for a minimum of 1 minute immersion at all times utensils are being washed.

**Is it safe to wash your hands?** It is imperative that hand washing occur when preparing food. The recommendation is to properly wash your hands (this can be using tap water under the advisory or a boiled water hand wash station set up), use a hand sanitizer, and have no bare hand contact (use gloves, utensils, or deli paper) of Ready to Eat foods. There should be No bare hand contact of Ready to Eat foods occurring during all and regular periods of food preparation and serving.

**Is it okay to make beverages with the water?** It is recommended that water for consumption or for food preparation be boiled or from an alternate source, such as bottled water. When using for human

consumption such as drinking, cooking, and making ice. Water should be boiled 1 minute (after water begins to boil). Self service beverage or post mix fountain equipment should not be in service.

**How should I handle fresh produce?** It is recommended to use pre-washed packaged produce, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables that do not require washing. Produce which has been washed prior to the advisory and that will be cooked to a temperature of 145°F are acceptable to prepare and serve. For establishments which have produce misters, misters should not be in service during the advisory.

**What should I do after the advisory is lifted?** The utility will be super chlorinating the water supply to ensure safety. Follow the advice or guidance of the water utility. These will probably flushing pipes, faucets for at least 5 minutes.

- Equipment with water line connections such as post mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment must be flushed, cleaned and sanitized in accordance to manufacturer's instructions.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Flush drinking fountains; run continuously for 5 minutes.
- For ice machines:
  - flush the water line
  - close the valve on the water line behind the machine disconnect the water line from the machine inlet
  - open the valve
  - run 5 gallons of water through the valve and dispose of the water
  - close valve
  - reconnect water line
  - Open the valve
  - flush the water lines in the machine
  - turn on the machine
  - make ice for 1 hour and dispose of the first batch of ice
  - Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, follow manufacturer's instructions

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**What is a Boil Water Notice?** A notice is when fecal coliform bacteria have been confirmed in a water supply.

**What are fecal coliform bacteria?** Fecal coliforms and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems. The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in contaminated drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms that persist, you may want to seek medical advice.

**Restaurants, Child Care Centers, Local Confinement, Residential care, Institutions, Schools, School Lunchrooms:**

**During a Boil Water Notice, establishments which are permitted by the department such as restaurants, food stands, meat markets shall be closed. A boil water notice is an imminent hazard and permitting action is required for protection of public health.**

**The department will advise licensing, permitting or certification agencies of the imminent hazard for facilities such as institutions, child care, local confinement, and schools.**

**Institutions should activate their back up water plan for water used for consumption and food preparation and service. Institutions should be operating under their emergency operations procedures.**

**Schools may remain open or be closed at the discretion of the local superintendent with precautionary measures taken such as discontinued use of water fountains, alternate hand washing methods, etc. Schools should be operating under their emergency operations procedures.**

**Local confinement shall be operating under their emergency operations procedures. Taking precautions to turn off water supplies for consumption and outsourcing food supplies from a vendor or establishment that is not in the affected area. Prepackaged, ready to eat food may be used as back up food supplies.**

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