

Frequently Asked Questions for Food Establishments During a Boil Water Notice

Does this Notice affect establishments preparing and selling foods?

Yes it does.

- Potable water is required for food preparation, cooking and cleaning. Due to the additional risk food establishment operators are requested to take a more stringent approach to this advisory.

Does the Notice affect food preparation in my establishment?

Yes it does.

- If using tap water in your food product, the minimum internal temperature of the food item must reach 74° C.
- If using tap water to cook your food product, ensure that the water is brought to a rolling boil for a minimum of one minute.
- Bottled or boiled water must be used when washing ready to eat food products that will not be cooked afterward or pre-washed items must be purchased.
- Tap water may be used to thaw food in a preparation sink, as long as the product is cooked afterward and reaches a minimum internal temperature of 74° C.
- Containers used to hold water must be food grade and must not have previously held highly allergenic substances such as dairy, egg, wheat or nut products.

What is the accepted method for boiling water?

- Bring water in pot to a rolling boil for one minute. The flat taste of boiled water can be improved by pouring it back and fourth from one container to another and/or allowing it to stand for a few hours.

- Boil as much water in a pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling. Caution should always be exercised when handling boiling water to minimize the risk of burns.
- Provide adequate protection against contamination of the water after boiling.

Can I use chemically disinfected water?

- Disinfecting your tap water instead of boiling it, is a safer way to prepare large quantities of water for kitchen use.
- Water can be prepared in large (ie 5 gallon) containers first thing in the morning. Use a ratio of 1 drop (0.05 ml) of unscented bleach (5%) to one liter of warm water and let stand for a minimum 30 minute to allow for contact time.

What do I do with food products produced during the water advisory?

- There should be no problems if the product reached an internal temperature of 74^{°C} during the cooking stage.
- To be safe, products that did not undergo a cooking/pasteurization stage should not be served to the public.

What can I do about ice, ice making, beverage dispensers, and water units?

- Ice that was bagged or made prior to the issuance of the water advisory may be used.
- Ice produced in ice machines after the advisory must be discarded, the machines cleaned/sanitized and not restarted until the advisory is rescinded.
- Disconnect or turn off water vending machines, drinking fountains, ice/syrup machines, produce misters, ice making units and soda machines to prevent their use.
- Not all water treatment systems are certified to remove bacteria, viruses and protozoa. Some are designed for chemical removal while others are designed for aesthetic improvements. If the manufacturer cannot assure safety, it is recommended that the water be boiled before use.
- Filters in lines should be backwashed or replaced after the advisory is rescinded.
- Discontinue the use of dipper wells. Use a separate, regularly sanitized scoop for each flavor (to avoid consumer exposure to allergens) until the Boil Water Notice is rescinded and use of the dipper well can resume.

The food premise has a dishwasher. Is it safe to use?

Yes

- You can continue to use your high temperature (82°C) rinse commercial dishwasher. If you are using a Lo-temperature chemical dishwasher ensure that the sanitize rinse cycle is fully operational.

Can I continue to wash dishes by hand?

Yes, you can.

- Manually wash, rinse and sanitize dishes, food equipment and utensils utilizing the approved three-compartment sink method. Sanitize in a 100 ppm chlorine solution and let dishes air dry.
- Try to use single-service articles when possible.

Can I use the water for hand washing?

Yes you can.

- Use proper hand washing techniques. After washing with warm water and soap, a commercial hand sanitizers (60% alcohol) can also be used.
- Wearing plastic gloves does not replace good hand washing when preparing foods.

Can I clean with tap water?

Yes you can.

- Ensure that you increase the concentration of the sanitizing agent.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions.
- Food contact surfaces should be washed with clean water and then sanitized using an acceptable sanitizing agent. Sanitizing agents for food contact surfaces include unscented household bleach, iodophors, and quaternary ammonia compounds.
- To prepare stock bleach solutions add 2-4 ml of 5% bleach per liters of water (1 tablespoon per gallon). This will make a 100 to 200 ppm chlorine solution.

How do I deal with beverages?

- Coffee machines usually produce water around 70 to 80 degrees Celsius, which is sufficient to destroy pathogens. However, a sufficient amount of time is needed to ensure that all harmful organisms are destroyed. Therefore let the coffee stand for at least five minutes before drinking.

- Percolated coffee and tea are safe to serve since the water is boiled before use.
- Discontinue mixed cold beverages containing water unless you are using bottled/boiled water or substitute with canned products.
- Discontinue the use of drinking fountains.
- Serve bottled or boiled water to your customers

We do our laundry in house. Should we change the way that we launder our linens in any way?

No. It has been demonstrated that normal washing and drying cycles are adequate in sanitizing linens.

What happens after the water quality advisory is rescinded?

- Re-start, flush and sanitize any water-using fixture or piece of equipment in accordance with the manufacturers' specifications. This may vary from fixture to fixture. Remember to include misters, icemakers (discard the first bin full), and beverage machines.
- Run cold water faucets and drinking fountains for 3 minutes each if they have not been used in the last 24 hours.

How will I know when the water quality notice is lifted?

- Once it has been determined that the water is safe to drink, the Medical Health Officer will issue a statement through the media.

Are patrons who drank water before the notice going to get sick?

- There has been no evidence of illness linked to the water system.
- Public Health will monitor for any signs of community illness.
- Persons concerned about their health should be directed to their family physician.