

Boil Water Advisory

What is a Boil Water Advisory?

Local departments and state or local agencies issue drinking water advisories when they believe water quality is or may be compromised. Advisories tell individuals, schools, hospitals, businesses, and others about the situation and how to take immediate action.

When is a Boil Water Advisory recommended?

Boil Water Advisories are issued when there is known contamination of the water supply or when there is a risk of contamination of the water supply.

What is the proper way to disinfect my water so it is safe to drink?

The best treatment method is boiling. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria, viruses, and parasites (freezing will not disinfect water).

- Bring water to a full rolling boil for at least 1 minute to kill most infectious organisms (germs).

For areas without power, disinfect tap water by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 teaspoon) of plain unscented household bleach to a gallon of water.

- Thoroughly mix the solution and allow the water to stand for 30 minutes.
- If the water is cloudy, repeat the process.
- Use a container with a cap or cover for disinfecting and storing water to be used for drinking. This will prevent re-contamination.

Should I be concerned if the water is yellow?

No, the color of the water should not affect its safety if it has been boiled for at least one minute.

How long is boiled water safe to drink?

As long as the water container is protected with a cap or a cover, it remains safe to drink.

Can I use my activated charcoal filter system (i.e. Brita or other brand name filters) to treat my water during a Boil Water Advisory?

No. These filters are not designed to remove contamination from an unsafe water supply. If you have run the water through your filter during the Boil Water Advisory, the filter could be contaminated. It is recommended that you discard the filter and replace it with a new one once the Boil Water Advisory is over.

What can I drink during a Boil Water Advisory?

- Water from an alternative source, such as bottled, is the best option.
- Tap water boiled for one minute. Cool and store all boiled water in a covered container.
- Disinfected tap water. Store all disinfected water in a covered container.

What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?

The boil water advisory is a precautionary measure. Even if someone has consumed potentially contaminated water before they were aware of the Boil Water Advisory, the likelihood of becoming ill is low. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should contact their healthcare provider. Symptoms associated with waterborne illness are also associated with foodborne illness, or even the common cold.

How does a Boil Water Advisory affect feeding my infant?

Mothers who are breastfeeding can continue to breastfeed their babies. Wash and sterilize all baby bottles and nipples before each use. If this is not possible, then single-serve, ready to feed bottles of formula must be used with a sterilized nipple. Always boil water before mixing concentrated liquid or powdered formula.

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- For areas without power, disinfect tap water by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 teaspoon) of plain unscented household bleach to a gallon of water.
 - Thoroughly mix the solution and allow the water to stand for 30 minutes.
 - If the water is cloudy, repeat the process.
 - Use a container with a cap or cover for disinfecting and storing water to be used for drinking. This will prevent re-contamination.

Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, water or soda dispenser?

Do not use if they are directly connected to your water supply. Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water for making coffee and ice. Also, filters do not work for removing bacteria. Once you are notified that the boil water advisory is cancelled, clean, disinfect, and flush these devices according to the operator's manual.

How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces or make ice?

Wash fruits and vegetables with boiled (then cooled water), bottled, or disinfected water. Use boiled water to wash surfaces where food is prepared. Make ice with boiled, bottled, or disinfected water.

What do I do with food and drink prepared during the advisory?

Throw away uncooked food, beverages or ice cubes if made or prepared using tap water during the day of the advisory.

How to wash hands during Boil Water Advisory?

Vigorous handwashing with soap and tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. However, if you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled (then cooled) water, disinfected, or bottled water with handwashing soap.

Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?

No. Do not use tap water to brush your teeth. Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water as you would for drinking.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?

- The water can be used for showering, baths, and shaving, but do not swallow water or allow it to get in your eyes, nose, or mouth. Supervise children and disabled individuals during their bath to make sure water is not swallowed. Minimize bathing time.
- Special Considerations: Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who have recent surgical wounds, have compromised immune systems, or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water for cleansing until the advisory is lifted. Anyone with questions or concerns should contact their healthcare provider.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes or clothes?

Yes, it is recommended that you wash by hand and use a bleach solution (1 teaspoon bleach per gallon of water. Bleach solution should say it contains 8.25% of sodium hypochlorite). Soak the rinsed dishes in the sanitizer solution for at least 1 minute. Allow dishes to completely air dry.

You can run the dishwasher through the hottest or 'sanitize' cycle. Follow the sanitizing step, in a clean basin, make a bleach solution (1 teaspoon bleach per gallon of water. Bleach solution should say it contains 8.25% of sodium hypochlorite). Remove the dishes from the dishwasher and soak in the

sanitizer solution for at least 1 minute. Let the dishes air dry completely before using again.

For clothes, use a hot water rinse cycle and heat-dried on the highest heat setting for 30 minutes to wash.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for household pets?

The same precautions that are taken to protect humans apply to household pets. Fish and other animals living in water should not be exposed to potentially contaminated water. If the animal's water needs to be changed, use cooled boiled or bottled water.

During a Boil Water Advisory, how are restaurants/food establishments still open?

All food service establishments in the area of impact, or those experiencing loss of water pressure or discoloration, should immediately implement the Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments (/health/services/Documents/MDA_EmergencyActionPlan_109428_7.pdf).

What infectious organisms might be present in contaminated water?

Illnesses from contaminated water occur principally by ingesting water. The major organisms that produce illnesses are protozoa such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium, and bacteria, such as Shigella, E. coli, and viruses. These organisms primarily affect the gastrointestinal system, causing diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, and vomiting with or without fever. Most of these illnesses are not usually serious or life threatening except in the elderly, the very young or those with compromised immune systems.

How will I know when the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted?

The community will be notified when the water is safe to drink without boiling. It will be communicated through social media channels, local media (TV & Radio), institutions (schools, hospitals), restaurants, and community centers. Contact your local public works office with questions and inquiries.

What do I do after the Advisory has been lifted?

- Turn on your tap slowly and run the water to flush water pipes for five minutes.
- You may need to clean appliances such as water softeners, filter units, water dispensers and ice makers. Read the owner's manual for directions to clean appliances.

Boil Water Instructions

- Bring water to a rolling boil for one minute.
- Let cool for 15 minutes before drinking.
- Store the cooled water in a clean container with a cover.

Unable to Boil Water? Disinfect With Bleach:

- Use unscented bleach to disinfect water supplies.
- Mix 8 drops (1/8 teaspoon) of bleach per gallon of water.
- Mix well and let stand for 30 minutes before use.

Additional Resources

- Great Lakes Water Authority, Frequently Asked Questions
(/health/information/Documents/GLWA%20Boil-Water-Advisory-FAQ_2017_10_12.pdf)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
(<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/bwa/public.html>)
- Food Service Emergency Action Plans
(/health/services/Documents/MDA_EmergencyActionPlan_109428_7.pdf)
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline (<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/safe-drinking-water-hotline>): 1-800-426-4791
- Cleaning & Preparing Personal Water Storage Containers
(<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/cleaning-preparing-storage-containers.html>)