

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do in the event of a boiled water advisory?

Q. Why is a boiled water advisory issued?

You may be asked to boil your tap water during an emergency or other situation, such as:

- * A water main break or repairs
- * If the water pressure drops due to equipment failure or power outages
- * If tests show that potentially harmful microorganisms may be present in the water
- * If the water source has been flooded
- * During other situations that warrant special action to protect the public's health

Q. How long will the need to boil water continue?

A. Public notification will be given when the boil water advisory is lifted. Your water utility and your local Health Department office can also give you details on how long your boil water advisory might last and will advise you when it is safe to return to normal water use. Typically, a boil water event lasts for 24 to 48 hours, but this can be longer and the need to boil water may last for several days or more. How long depends on the conditions that caused the need to boil, how quickly the conditions can be corrected, and how long it takes for laboratory results to confirm that your water is again ready to drink.

Q. How do I boil my water so that it is safe to drink?

A. Bring water to a FULL ROLLING BOIL for 1 MINUTE, then allow the water to COOL BEFORE USE. Water may take 30 minutes to cool, please plan ahead. Make up a batch of boiled water advance so you will not be tempted to use it hot and risk scalds or burns. Boiled water may be used for drinking, cooking, and washing.

Q. Does my in-home water treatment system provide enough protection?

A. No. It is not encouraged for residents to rely on home treatment units. It is recommended that you use boiled (and then cooled) water or an alternate source such as bottled water that is certified for sale. Most in-home treatment devices are not designed to remove pathogens and should not be relied on to protect you during a boil water event. Even treatment units that are designed to remove pathogens may not do so all the time unless they have been properly maintained. Common home treatment devices that have limited or no ability to remove pathogens include: carbon filters; water softeners and other ion exchange units; sediment filters; chlorine removers; and aerators.

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Q. What if I have a reverse osmosis treatment unit on my faucet or house?

A. A properly operating reverse osmosis (RO) unit can remove pathogens, including viruses, bacteria and protozoa. However, there are many units available to the public which can not be relied upon to remove pathogens. Furthermore, RO units must be diligently maintained to assure effective treatment. If you are at all uncertain of the capabilities of your RO unit, do not rely on it to remove potentially harmful pathogens. Instead, you should use boiled (and then cooled) water or water from an acceptable alternate source.

Q. What if I have a water pitcher/dispenser with a filter?

A. Most of these units are not capable of removing pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, and protozoa. The few that are designed to do so, may still require disinfection to address viruses and must be properly operated and diligently maintained to ensure effective treatment. It is recommended that you use boiled (and then cooled) water or an alternate source such as bottled water that is certified for sale.

Q. Are there any other ways to disinfect my water so that it is safe to drink?

A. Boiling and bottled water are the most reliable means to ensure safe potable water during a boil water event and should always be your first choices. However, in extended emergencies such as an area wide power outage, potable water that needs no further treatment may be supplied by your water utility or local emergency response agency from a tanker truck.

Q. What is an acceptable alternate source for safe drinking water?

A. Acceptable alternate sources for drinking water include: • Bottled water that is certified for sale. • Water from another public water supply (one that is not under the boil water advisory)

Q. Is it safe to use water from a water tanker?

A. Bulk water is not as convenient as bottled water but can be a much welcomed and safe alternate water source, and in extended emergencies may be provided to you at no charge. Water provided by a certified bulk water hauler can be used for drinking, cooking, and washing with no further treatment. You may also rely on water from a tanker operated by your water utility or by an emergency response agency. Depending on the boil water event, tankers may be set up as temporary water stations in your community where you can fill containers for home use.



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Q. What container should I use to obtain water from another location?

A. The container you use to get water from an alternate source or temporary water station can greatly affect your water. Never use a container that has ever held a chemical, gasoline or other fuel. Use only clean containers that you know are fit and that are free of all dirt and contaminants.

Q. Can I use my water for cooking?

A. No, any water used for food preparation or cooking needs to be from an acceptable alternate source or boiled first. This would include water used for ice.

Q. What if I am boiling my water as part of the cooking process?

A. It is more protective to boil the water first, to prevent the potential for inadequate heating. The cooking process should bring the water to a full rolling boil for at least one minute before adding the food item (for example, making pasta). If the water will be at a slight boil for a long time, then this will also be protective.

Q. How should I wash fruit and vegetables and make ice?

A. Fruits, vegetables, and any other foods that will not be cooked should be washed and rinsed with boiled (and then cooled) water or water from an acceptable alternate source. Similarly, ice should be made with either boiled water or water from an acceptable alternate source.

Q. What should I do with the ice in my freezer after a Boil Water Advisory has been issued?

A. If you have an automatic ice maker, you should dump existing ice and once the advisory has been lifted, flush the water feed lines by making and discarding three batches of ice cubes. Wipe down the ice bin with a disinfectant. If your water feed line to the machine is longer than 20 feet, increase to five batches.

Q. Can I use my water for making baby formula or drinks?

A. No, not without precautions. Any water used for baby food, formula, or making beverages must be boiled (and then cooled) or be from an acceptable alternate source.



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Q. Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes?

A. **Hand-washed dishes:** No. Use boiled (then cooled) water, water from an alternate source, or after washing with dish detergent rinse for a minute in a dilute bleach (1 tablespoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water). Allow dishes, cutlery, cups, etc. to completely air dry before use. **Home dishwasher:** Yes, if the hot wash is at least 212 degrees F and includes a full dry cycle. However, most home dishwashers do not reach this temperature. If you are uncertain of the temperature of your dishwasher, rinse in dilute bleach and completely air dry as described for hand washed dishes.

Q. Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing clothes?

A. Yes, unless a "Do Not Use" notification has been issued, it is safe to wash clothes in tap water if the clothes are completely dried before being worn. However, increased turbidity that sometimes occurs during a boil water event may discolor clothing, especially whites.

Q. Can I brush my teeth with the water without boiling it?

A. No. Any water you ingest or place in your mouth should be disinfected by boiling (and then cooled) or come from an alternate source, such as bottled water.

Q. Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?

A. Unless a "Do Not Use" notification has been issued, your water may be used by healthy individuals for showering, bathing, shaving, and washing if care is taken not to swallow water and avoid shaving nicks. To minimize the chance of infections, people with open wounds, cuts, blisters or recent surgical wounds and people who are immunocompromised or suffer from chronic illness should use boiled water (then cooled) or water from an alternate source. Children and disabled individuals should be supervised to ensure water is not ingested. Sponge bathing is advisable, and bathing time should be minimized to further reduce the potential for ingestion.

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Q. How should I wash my hands during a boil water advisory?

A. Generally, vigorous hand washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. If you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled (then cooled) water, bottled water, or water from another acceptable source for hand washing.

Q. Should I use hand sanitizing lotion or wipes?

A. Hand sanitizing wipes alone are not enough, especially to clean your hands for making food. Alcohol based sanitizers work against some common germs (like E. coli, and Salmonella) but may not be effective for cryptosporidium and bacterium spores.

Q. Is the water safe to give to my pet?

A. To be certain, give them water that has been boiled then cooled or water from an acceptable alternate source. Many pets are exposed to a variety of pathogens; and therefore, may be more resistant. However, many pets are vulnerable to the same diseases that humans can get from contaminated water and can spread these diseases into the environment or pass them on to their owners. More specific information may be available from your veterinarian, based on the actual animal and conditions for the boil water advisory.

Q. Does a boil water advisory affect how I can use my toilets?

A. There is no need to disinfect water used for flushing.

This information is being provided as a resource for any incident involving public water sources in the event of a Boiled Water Advisory/Notice. Questions related to lifting the Advisory/Notice, should be directed to the individual provider.