

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Boil Water Advisories

What is a Boil Water Advisory?

- A Boil Water Advisory is issued as a precautionary measure when there is a POTENTIAL for contamination.
- A Boil Water Order is issued when contamination has actually been confirmed in the water system.

Why do I have to boil my water?

- It is a precautionary measure to destroy bacteria. Contamination may be due to equipment failure, leaking pipes in the system, or insufficient disinfectant in the water supply. Use only bottled or boiled water for drinking, diluting fruit juices, and all other food preparation.

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

- The preferred method of treatment is boiling. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites (freezing will not disinfect water). Bring water to a full rolling boil for 1-2 minutes to kill most infectious organisms. Timing starts when the water starts to bubble. Boiling it longer than 3 minutes may adversely affect water quality and taste. Cool the water then place in clean containers for use.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes or clothes?

- Yes... if you disinfect dishes and other food contact surfaces by immersing them for at least 1 minute in clean tap water that contains 1 teaspoon of unscented household bleach per gallon of water. Allow dishes to completely air dry. Most household dishwashers do not reach the proper temperature to sanitize dishes. Laundry water does not need to be treated...it is safe to wash clothes in tap water.

Can I use this water for bathing and shaving?

- Unless specifically listed, water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, so long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water in eyes or nose or mouth.

Can I use ice?

- Ice should be made with boiled water or bottled water. Dispose of ice cubes, and do not use ice from an automatic icemaker. Remake ice cubes with water that has been boiled, or purchase bagged ice from an area not under advisory. Flush the icemaker water line after the advisory is lifted.

Should my pets get boiled water too?

- Yes, this is a good idea because many pets, such as dogs, can get some of the same diseases as humans and can give these diseases to their owners.

Is it OK to water my plants?

- Yes, it is ok to water your plants with possibly contaminated tap water without boiling it first.

I have a tap filter or filtering water pitcher, do I still need to boil my tap water?

- Yes... most pitchers that have a water filter do not filter out bacteria. If you have other filters on your refrigerator, on your faucet, or under your sink, read the package insert to see if the filter removes bacteria. If in doubt, boil the water.

How should I wash fruit and vegetables?

- Fruits and vegetables should be washed with boiled (then cooled) water or bottled water.

What if I have a cut?

- You should generally use cooled boiled water on open cuts, wounds or sores.

Can I drink soda from a fountain machine?

- Stop using fountain pop machines connected to a contaminated public water supply.

QUICK REFERENCE CHART

Do I have to boil the tap water for the following uses?

Drinking	Yes
Ice Cubes	Yes...existing ice cubes should be thrown out and new ones made with bottled or boiled water
Brushing Teeth	Yes
Baby's Formula	Yes
Washing Fruit/Vegetables	Yes
Preparing Food	Yes
Coffee, Tea, Lemonade, etc.	Yes
Filtered Water	Yes...most water filters do not filter out bacteria.
Pet Consumption	Yes...Pets can get some of the same diseases as people. It is a good idea to give them boiled water. But for specific information, contact your veterinarian.
Washing Dishes	No...but disinfect for 1 minute with 1 teaspoon of bleach per gallon of water
Laundry	No
Bathing / Shaving	No...but do not swallow water or allow in eyes, nose or mouth.
Watering Grass or Garden	No...but fruits/vegetables must be washed using boiled or bottled water before consumption.