

BOIL WATER NOTICES

Checklist for Food Service Establishment Operators

Boil water orders and notifications are issued to protect public health when treated water is found to be unsafe for public consumption, or when there is reason to believe that the water may become unsafe. These orders or notices are used in response to microbiological contamination or to address conditions that create a potential for contamination from simple waterline breaks to more complex matters such as interruption of treatment, power outages or floods.

When a boil water order or notice is issued for your establishment, the water from your tap is not safe to use for drinking, mixing in cold beverages such as juice or soda, making ice, or preparing or washing food that will not be cooked. If potential exposures cannot be controlled, the facility must be closed until the drinking water is determined to be safe for consumption.

Here are steps that you must take to operate safely when a boil water notice is effect. Please be sure all of your employees implement safety measures until further notice.

First:

- Discard all foods prepared with tap water unless you are certain that the food was thoroughly cooked, such as with boiled foods and baked goods, or that the product was made before the water emergency went into effect.
- Discard ice or cold beverages made with tap water unless you are certain that the ice and/or beverages were made before the water emergency went into effect.
- Post a clearly written “Do Not Drink” notice on all publicly accessible sinks, spigots and drinking fountains. Turn off all drinking fountains if possible.
- Turn off all post-mix beverage appliances and ice machines. Post clearly written notes on the machines that say “Do Not Use”.
- Discuss the importance of proper hygiene and glove use with employees. These routine protective measures become even more important during boil water emergencies.
- Be sure all staff on all shifts understand and implement all needed measures.

Next:

- Consider removing menu items that are difficult to prepare with limited water. If appropriate, add or switch to prepared foods, pre-washed produce, canned vegetables, single-service tableware, etc.

- Provide bottled or canned beverages; or use a pre-mix beverage machine with the water and ice dispensers turned off.
- Use bagged or prepackaged ice from a safe, approved alternate source such as a commercial supplier.
- Tap water may be used for:
 - food preparation when the food and water is boiled as part of the cooking process such as cooking pasta or soup;
 - coffee makers;
 - preparing, washing and sanitizing solutions for food contact surfaces as long as the surfaces are allowed to completely air dry before use;
 - washing floors and walls with your usual cleaning agent; and,
 - hand washing with soap and water. An antimicrobial hand sanitizer that does not require water is not an acceptable substitute for proper hand washing but is a good addition.
- Boil tap water if it will be used for drinking or for washing or preparing food that will not be cooked. The water must be heated to a **FULL ROLLING BOIL FOR AT LEAST ONE MINUTE** and then **COOLED** before use.
- Consider using commercially bottled water or water from a safe, approved alternate source.
- Follow normal procedures for hand washing dishes, cutlery, pots and pans which include a final sanitizing rinse with a dilute bleach solution of 1 tablespoon of regular unscented bleach (5.25%) per gallon of water and allowing the items to completely air dry before use.
- Commercial or home-style dishwashers may be used if they are operated as per the manufacturer's instructions. Allow items to completely air dry before use.

After the boil water notice is lifted:

- Flush all water lines for at least 5 minutes and then clean and sanitize all sinks and fixtures. If your service connection is long or complex (as found in a commercial plaza), consider flushing the water lines for a longer period. Your building superintendent or landlord should be able to advise you on longer flushing times.
- Flush and disinfect all equipment with direct water connections such as soda dispensing machines, ice machines, drinking fountains and steam tables per the manufacturer's instructions. Run equipment for a full cycle and flush contents to waste.
- Flush appliances, such as water heaters and water tanks. Backwash or replace any water filters per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean and sanitize all food/beverage/ice equipment and food contact surfaces that were in use at the time of the water emergency.