



Water Supply Warnings

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ater supply warnings are generally required when public water suppliers need to provide consumers with immediate and specific actions to take. Water supply notices can be:

- Boil Water Advisory (BWA)
- Do Not Drink Notice
- Do Not Use Notice

Although your water authority may use slightly different terms, these notices are typically issued by your public

water supplier company, not your water regulatory agency. Unfortunately, you may hear about a public notice on the news before you get the notice from your water company. If you have been issued any kind of Public Notice about your water supply, contact your food regulatory agency for guidance as to whether your facility can remain open using an alternate water supply, or if your facility should be closed until the water is deemed safe. Keep an open dialogue with your food regulatory agency, as they are the experts on food safety.



WE CAN'T USE
OUR WATER!
WHAT NOW?



Boil Water Advisory (BWA)

This type of public notice is typically issued to inform consumers that they should boil their water or use an alternative source of drinking water. They are usually issued because of a microbiological contaminant in the drinking water that presents a threat to public health and safety. Boiling the water will kill the microbes of concern.



Do Not Drink Notice

This type of notice is typically issued when the concentration of a chemical contaminant (man-made or naturally-occurring) exceeds a health advisory (HA) level. Boiling the water is not an option, as in many cases it will concentrate the chemical of concern. This water can be used for flushing toilets, bathing, or washing.



Do Not Use Notice

This notice is issued when there is a situation where the water supply contains a chemical or contaminant that causes acute health effects by ingestion, inhalation, or skin contact. This notice is exactly that—*do not* use the water for any application. Contact your food regulatory authority immediately if this type of notice is issued.



In most situations, food facilities will find themselves with a Boil Water Advisory, therefore this article will primarily address BWA situations. Additional comments will be made regarding Do Not Drink Notices and Do Not Use Notices at the conclusion of this article.

What food facilities are affected?

All food facilities—including restaurants, supermarkets, caterers, foodservice operations in schools, nursing homes and hospitals, charitable food facilities, kitchens in non-profit institutions, food manufacturers and distributors, and anyone else involved in the commercial preparation and distribution of food, water, and beverages—could be affected if a Boil Water Advisory is issued in your area.

What does a BWA mean?

A BWA means that your water supplier has identified a potential microbial contaminant in the water source. This is their notice to users of the water supply on how to use the water properly to avoid anyone getting ill.

Guidelines for a BWA affect all water used for consumption including: drinking, preparing food, beverages, ice cubes, washing fruits and vegetables, handwashing, washing dishes, and similar.

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What should foodservice managers do?

A foodservice facility manager or the Person-in-Charge (PIC) is responsible for conducting both the initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

1. Assess food, water, and ice in your facility affected by the advisory start date.
2. Implement the appropriate emergency procedures outlined below, or remain closed until disinfection of contaminated items occurs and the Boil Water Advisory is lifted.
3. Immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures.
4. Follow all water department requirements for flushing lines, and thoroughly clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces prior to resuming normal operations if closed.

What should food facilities do to address a current BWA?

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be used to address specific affected food operations during a BWA.

Where “boiled” water is indicated, the water must remain at a rolling boil for at least one minute. It is, however, recommended that large volumes of water should be brought to a rolling boil for at least three to five minutes to be sure the entire volume of water is at the boil temperature. If not used immediately, it should be stored until use in a cleaned and sanitized container.

Although chemicals (e.g. bleach) are sometimes used for disinfecting small amounts of household drinking water, chemical disinfection is not an option for a food facility due to the lack of onsite equipment for testing chemical residuals.

What are the alternative sources of drinking water?

- Use commercially bottled water.
- Haul water from an approved public water supply.
- Arrange to use a licensed potable drinking water tanker truck (discuss this option with your regulatory agency).



Use commercially bottled water or arrange to use a licensed potable drinking water tanker truck (discuss with your regulatory agency).

What about beverages made with piped-in water?

What should be done about beverages made with piped-in water—including post-mix carbonated beverages, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water dispensers, juice, tea, etc.?

Discontinue use of post-mix carbonated beverage machines, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water heaters, etc. using auto-fill. Remove and replace any filters that may have been connected to water lines.

What should be done about ice?

- Discontinue use of the ice machine. Discard existing ice. Clean and sanitize the ice bins.
- Use commercially-manufactured ice from an unaffected water supply.

What about food products requiring water?

- Discard any ready-to-eat food that may have been prepared with water just prior to the advisory or incident.
- Prepare ready-to-eat food using commercially bottled or boiled water.

What alternatives are there for washing produce?

- Use pre-washed packaged produce.
- Use frozen/canned fruits and vegetables.
- Wash fresh produce with boiled, commercially-bottled water, or safe potable water hauled from another unaffected public water supply system.

Can tap water be used to thaw frozen foods?

- Do not use tap water to thaw foods.
- Thaw only in the refrigerator, or microwave as part of the cooking process.

Can tap water be used when cooking food?

- No. Use commercially bottled water, or use water that has been at a rolling boil for at least three minutes.
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container.
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

Can tap water be used by food facility employees for handwashing?

- The best practice is to use only boiled, bottled, or treated water for handwashing.
- If that is not possible and handwashing is done with soap and tap water, thoroughly dry hands with paper towels and then use a hand sanitizer.
- Remember—food handlers must not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. Instead they should use physical barriers, such as disposable papers, gloves, and utensils.

Can patrons use tap water in restrooms during a BWA?

- Patrons may use tap water for handwashing, provided that hand sanitizer is made available at each sink.
- Post a notice advising patrons not to use tap water for drinking or for brushing teeth.

What about cleaning and sanitizing utensils and tableware?

- Use disposable, single-service utensils and tableware, or use the existing automatic dish machine or the three-compartment sink.
- Make certain the sanitization step is being properly conducted (sanitizer concentration/temperature).

Heat Sanitizing Dishwashers

- May be used only if verification can be made via a dishwashing thermometer that the final rinse temperature is reaching 180°F or above for the full rinse cycle.
- If this cannot be verified, after removal from the dishwasher, all dishes should be dipped in an approved sanitizer, followed by proper air drying.

Chemical Sanitizing Machines

- May only be used if the chemical sanitizer level can be verified to 100 ppm chlorine, *and* the contact time of the rinse cycle is one full minute.
- If this cannot be verified, after removal from the dishwasher, all dishes should be dipped in an approved sanitizer (verified to be 100 ppm chlorine), followed by proper air drying.

Three-Compartment Sinks

- Sink basins should be filled using only water that has been boiled as required or is from a potable water source (i.e. bottled water).
- The three-compartment sink method of cleaning can then be utilized with verification that the sanitizer in the third-compartment is at the proper concentration.

RECOVERY PHASE

Recovery involves the necessary steps for reopening and returning to a normal, safe operation. Your regulatory authority or water supplier will provide specific instructions when the water is safe to use. A food facility that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations should not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory agency.

After notice has been provided that the water supply is safe to consume/use, the Person-in-Charge must ensure the fol-

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lowing has been completed and/or follow the instruction given by the water authority:

- Flush all pipes/faucets.
- Follow the directions of your water utility (in the newspaper, and on radio or television) or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least five minutes.
- Equipment with waterline connections—such as post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections—must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Remove and replace any water filter (pads, cartridges, or similar) that may be connected to any water lines. For example: Ice machine filter, water fountains, beverage units, and similar.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Flush drinking fountains: run continuously for five minutes.
- Ice machine sanitation:
 - > Flush the water line to the machine inlet.
 - > Close the valve on the water line behind the machine and disconnect the water line from the machine inlet.
 - > Open the valve, run five gallons of water through the valve, and dispose of the water.
 - > Close the valve.
 - > Reconnect the water line to the machine inlet.
 - > Open the valve.
 - > Flush the water lines in the machine.
 - > Turn on the machine.
 - > Make ice for one hour and dispose of the first batch.
 - > Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Water heaters may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water.
- Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected and flushed (or filters replaced) to remove any contamination. Check with the manufacturer for details.

Do Not DRINK Notices:

With this type of notice, boiling the water will not control the situation; therefore, heat sanitizing, chemical sanitizing, and cooking/boiling will not suffice to control the water contamination. *An alternate water supply will be needed.* This alternate supply shall not include water from the affected source that has been 'boiled.' Dishwashers, heat or chemical, may not be used. A three-compartment method of warewashing using bottled water or an alternate safe supply will be needed. The affected water should not touch surfaces of food, food contact surfaces of equipment, or food employee hands. This water should not be used in food as an ingredient, even if the food will be cooked. If an alternate supply of water cannot be obtained, a facility may not operate. The above guidelines generally still apply, except for situations that allow for boiled water to be used. Remember, these types of notices are issued because some 'chemical' is present in the water that exceeds the allowable HA limits.

Do Not USE Notices:

This notice is exactly what it says: do not use any of the water in the facility for any application. This would include not only all of the food safety uses, but for handwashing or any use that involves skin contact, activities that promote inhalation from water vapor, or supplying to animals, aquatic life, or plants. Do not use the water for anything, and contact your regulatory authority immediately if this type of notice is issued.

Protect your foodservice clients by following all orders linked to water safety, and by adhering to proper follow-up procedures afterward. The health and well-being of those in your care is at stake. **E**



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