

Guide to Using Water Safely During a Boil Water Advisory

FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

In general, a Boil Water Advisory means all water to be used for cooking or drinking must be brought to rolling boil for at least one minute prior to use. A safe alternative to using boiled water is to use commercially bottled water.

Food service establishments may continue to operate during the Boil Water Advisory as long as the measures below are strictly followed.

During the Advisory, canned or bottled beverages must be used exclusively. Machines used to dispense cold beverages **MUST NOT** be used (i.e. slush machines, carbonated beverage machines, iced cappuccino machines, etc.). The lines directly connected to the tap water for mixing must be disconnected. Once the boil water advisory has been lifted, the lines should be cleaned and sanitized according to manufacturer's instructions.

Discard all food and beverages made with untreated or potentially contaminated water. Wash and sanitize all containers containing these products in accordance with the guidelines provided below.

All water that is to be provided directly to your customers for drinking must be commercially bottled or tap water that has been treated. To treat water, it should be boiled for at least one minute, and then stored in clean, covered containers until it is served.

All water that is used to wash, rinse or soak foods (e.g. fruits and vegetables) must be commercially bottled or boiled for one minute.

All water which is used as an ingredient in food products that will be ready-to-eat without cooking (e.g. drink mixes, puddings, jellies, dressings, condiments, sauces, etc.) must be commercially bottled or boiled for one minute.

It is acceptable to continue to prepare food that will be boiled in water, provided the water is brought to a rolling boil for a minimum of one minute.

Supermarkets/produce markets must turn off and disconnect spray hoses used to spray their fruits and vegetables for the duration of the Advisory. Lines should be kept physically separated from fresh produce as lines are difficult to clean. Once the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted, lines should be cleaned, flushed and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. All contaminated produce must be removed.

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Coffee brewers and hot tea towers can operate if water temperatures are maintained between 90.5°C - 121°C (195°F – 250°F). These high temperatures are capable of destroying microorganisms. Management should verify temperatures daily using a probe thermometer. (Hot cappuccino and hot chocolate machines can be used if temperatures meet or exceed the above temperatures).

All ice must be made from commercially bottled water, must or must originate from tap water that has been boiled for at least one minute, or must be purchased from a commercial ice supply distributor not affected by the BWA. Ice machines must be emptied and not used for the duration of the Boil Water Advisory. Once the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted, the lines connected directly to the tap water must be disconnected, and then cleaned and sanitized according to manufacturer's instructions.

Commercial dishwashers that use hot water wash at 60°C (140°F), with a hot water sanitizing rinse of 82°C (180°F) for ten seconds would be considered satisfactory. Where parasitic contamination is suspected, low temperature dishwashers using chemical sanitizers may not be effective. Beverage glass washers that utilize a cold water rinse must not be used.

Dishes may be hand washed by using a three compartment sink, for washing, rinsing and sanitizing respectively. In this case, dishes are rinsed in the second sink in water at a temperature not lower than 43°C (109.5°F), and sanitized in the third sink by immersing them in a hot water sanitizing rinse of 77°C (170.6°F) for 45 seconds (to remove either bacterial or parasitic contamination). In the event a BWA is caused by bacterial contamination, and where joint parasitic contamination is unlikely, sanitizing may be accomplished in the third sink. Sanitization can be completed by immersing dishes in a chlorine solution of 100 parts per million available chlorine (15 ml bleach in 4.5 litres of water) and should be verified by using chlorine test strips in accordance with regulations. Other methods of sanitizing can be used as described in the *Ontario Food Premises Regulation*. Single-use, disposable dishware and utensils may also be utilized.

Countertops, chopping boards or large utensils (that can not be washed in dishwashers or sinks) should be washed with soap and hot water first, and then sanitized with a strong bleach solution. This solution can be made by mixing approximately 30 ml (6 tsp) of liquid household bleach in to 4.5 L (one gallon) of water, to make a chlorine solution of approximately 200 parts per million of available chlorine. Verify by using chlorine test strips in accordance with regulations. Make this solution fresh daily, do not reuse or store it.

Frequent, thorough handwashing must be emphasized to all staff. Signs advising of the appropriate handwashing technique should be posted at all sinks.

If the Boil Water Advisory has been issued as a precaution and no outbreak of human illness has occurred, there is no need for additional hand disinfection with bleach solution or alcohol using the measures described below.

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If the Boil Water Advisory has been issued because of a human illness related outbreak or the presence of a known pathogen (e.g. E. coli or Shigella), hands should be washed with tap water and liquid soap, and rinsed using the following solution:

- Place 5 ml (1 tsp) of liquid household bleach in 4.5 L (1 gallon) of water.
- Mix and let stand for at least 15 minutes before using.
- The mixture can be transferred to smaller, clean containers for use. A one gallon hand pump works well.
- Do not wash hands directly in this solution unless wash water is emptied after each use.
- Label the containers as follows: “Chlorine Bleach Solution. Apply to hands after washing. Do not drink”.
- This solution must be provided in customer and staff washrooms, as well as at all handwash basins.

Alcohol-based hand disinfectants, containing more than 60% alcohol may be used after washing hands with soap, or in situations where water is not available.

Signs advising not to drink the tap water must be posted at all sinks. Drinking fountains should be rendered inoperable by removing handles or covering them and posting signs appropriately.

Any employee reporting they are suffering from an enteric illness must be excluded from work and can be tested by their family doctor. The employee must not return to work until symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours. Frequent, thorough hand washing should be emphasized for all staff.

If there is a known agent, or the Medical Officer of Health declared an outbreak in the community or food service premise, then more stringent guidelines may need to be followed by health units based on relevant enteric disease guidelines.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance during this difficult emergency situation.

For more information or to speak with a Public Health Inspector, contact York Region *Health Connection* at **1-800-361-5653** or **TTY 1-866-252-9933**.

Adapted from guidelines from the Simcoe County District Health Unit and the Windsor-Essex Health Unit