Boil Water Advisory

For Commercial/Public Facilities

How to operate a commercial/public facility under a boil water advisory

Boil water advisories are issued when a municipal, community or private water supply is at risk of microbial contamination. These advisories also apply to:

- commercial businesses (ex: restaurants)
- public facilities (ex: schools)

in the area where they are issued.

Owners/operators of commercial and public facilities that provide water to the public are responsible for the safety of the water they supply. This includes:

- restaurants, food stores
- hospitals
- schools, child care facilities (centres, private homes)
- personal care homes, residential care facilities
- bulk water hauling vehicles
- bottling plants, self-serve water dispenser units
- commercial ice distributors
- dental, medical offices
- arenas, pools, spas, community centres
- food processing facilities

Public health inspectors may impose additional restrictions on facilities that possess food handling permits under The Public Health Act (ex: restaurants, personal care home kitchens). Facilities that cannot meet these added conditions may have to shut down operations until the boil water advisory is lifted. In facilities where the contamination risk is extreme, facilities may not be allowed to reopen until a public health inspector gives written permission.

What to do during a boil water advisory

If your facility water supply is monitored under the provincial semi-public water system program, you must contact your regional drinking water officer as there may be additional instructions.

Most commercial and public facilities can keep operating during a boil water advisory if the following standards are strictly adhered to:

Use a safe, alternative, water source

Local water bottlers and water haulers may be affected by the same boil water advisory if they get their water from the same source. In this case, commercially bottled water must be used, or water must be hauled from a safe, approved source.

Contact your regional public health inspector or drinking water officer about finding safe alternative sources.

Advise clients and customers not to use tap water

You must post signs at all sinks, drinking fountains and in public washrooms telling clients and customers not

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to drink the tap water. You can get signs from your water supplier, regional public health inspector or drinking water officer.

Children and some customers may have to be supervised in areas where water is easily available for public use.

Use bottled water from a safe source to prepare food and beverages

It's difficult to boil large quantities of water and still ensure it's safe to drink. Therefore all drinking water given to customers/patients to drink, and all water used to prepare food and beverages (ex: powdered mixes, dehydrated food) must be from a reliable safe source such as bottled water.

All uncooked food and beverages that were prepared with tap water before the advisory must be discarded. All the containers must be disinfected before reuse (see below).

Disinfect used dishes and/or wash them in a commercial dishwasher

Dishes and utensils that may have been contaminated before the boil water advisory was issued must be washed and disinfected in a commercial dishwasher before they are used again. Alternatively, dishes and utensils can also be cleaned and disinfected by hand using the "three-sink method" and a sanitizing solution (see instructions for sanitizing solution – for dishes and counters).

Commercial dishwashers can be used only if:

- the wash water is clear at all times (not cloudy or coloured)
- the dishwasher is operating in accordance with the specifications on the machine's data plate, which states the cycle times and temperatures that must be used
- the dishwasher can sanitize with either hot water (82° Celsius) or with a chemical solution approved under Manitoba's Food and Food Handling Establishments Regulation.

Dishes can be washed by hand – using the "three-sink method" – only if they are then disinfected by immersion for one minute in a sanitizing solution. They can also be washed by hand using other methods approved under Manitoba's Food and Food Handling Establishments Regulation.

As an alternative, disposable plates, cups and utensils can also be used to reduce the amount of dish washing.

Disconnect beverage dispensers and fountains

Drinking water fountains and machines used to dispense cold beverages that have water lines directly connected to tap water lines (ex: slush machines, carbonated drink dispensers, iced cappuccino machines, ice cream machines) must be disconnected. Some beverage dispensers have in-line, pre-treatment devices but they do not disinfect or render the water safe. Bottled water from a safe source or canned drinks must be used instead.

Commercial coffee brewing machines that are directly connected to tap water lines can be used only if:

- The machine is equipped with a thermostatically maintained water tank that stores water at temperatures at 82°C (180°F) or hotter.
- The temperature of the water is verified using a metal stem probe thermometer by running a full batch and taking the temperature at a point below the funnel when the decanter is half full. The minimum temperature must reach 71°C (160°F) or hotter.

This exemption is not applicable to non-commercial or domestic grade coffee brewers as there may be a wide variation of temperatures in these machines.

Use bottled water to wash fruit, vegetables, other food

All foods that need to be washed must be processed using only commercially bottled water from an approved source. Spray and mist hoses such as those in grocery display cases must be disconnected during the course of the boil water advisory.

Use reliable, safe water to make ice

All ice made before the boil water advisory was issued must be discarded. Ice machines must be emptied and disconnected until the advisory is lifted. Ice storage containers/bins must be cleaned and then disinfected using a sanitizing solution before being used to store fresh commercial ice (see instructions for sanitizing solution – for dishes and counters).

Thaw food in refrigerators or microwaves

Do not use tap water to thaw frozen food. Frozen food must be thawed in a refrigerator, in a microwave or as part of the cooking process.

Wash hands often using a chlorine bleach solution or alcohol-based hand sanitizer

All staff must regularly wash their hands with warm tap water and soap, and then they must rinse them with a chlorine bleach solution (see instructions for chlorine bleach solution – for hand washing). The chlorine bleach solution must be available in all staff washrooms as well as in kitchens and food preparation areas.

As an alternative to chlorine bleach solutions, alcohol-based hand sanitizers that have more than 60 per cent alcohol may also be used. Note: baby wet wipes will not disinfect hands and should not be used for hand cleaning. Consult your regional public health inspector before using alcohol-based hand disinfectants to make sure you're using an effective formulation.

Disinfect countertops, food preparation areas, tables

When a boil water advisory is issued, you must use a sanitizing solution to clean all countertops, chopping boards, tables and food preparation areas. Wash these areas with detergent and hot tap water and then disinfect them using a clean cloth and sanitizing solution to wipe them (see instructions for sanitizing solution – for dishes and counters). Let the solution stay on the surface for at least one minute before wiping dry with a clean cloth or let air dry.

Use extra care with children

Use only bottled water from a reliable, safe water source for anything children drink or eat, including infant food and formula. Also use it for hand washing and food preparation, in day care facilities, home economics classes and cafeterias.

Use standard disinfecting process for diaper changing tables. Ensure employees and children follow standard hand washing procedures using bottled water.

Contact the regional public health inspector about using water for children's wading pools or water tables.

Monitor public showers, pools and spas

Shut down showers in facilities where children/clients/patients are at risk of swallowing the shower water (ex: care homes, swimming classes, school gyms); use sponge baths instead. In facilities used only by adults (ex: public gyms, exercise/dance facilities), post signs in visible places warning people not to swallow water from the shower.

Talk to a public health inspector about the water in public pools and spas. Normal chlorine levels must be maintained during a boil water advisory and there may be additional requirements.

Use bottled water for dental patients

Dentists must provide bottled water from a reliable source for patients to rinse their mouths. The tap water supply to high-speed drills and hand pieces must be shut off. Bottled water in a closed system, or a bulb syringe should be used for rinsing.

Talk to a public health inspector about bottling plants, water dispensers, and water hauling vehicles

Bottling plants, water dispensers and bulk water haulers may also be adversely impacted by a boil water advisory situation. Bottling and dispensing equipment must be disconnected until the boil water advisory is lifted or approval is given to re-open. Contact your regional

public health inspector for instructions about water that was bottled before the advisory was issued. Your inspector will likely tell you to dump the water and to sanitize the system/dispenser once the advisory is lifted. Use manufacturers' instructions to sanitize the system. It's advisable to test the water before the water is provided to the public.

If you can demonstrate to the regional medical officer of health that your operation has a regular bacterial testing and maintenance program, you may be allowed to continue providing water during the advisory. Contact your local public health inspector about getting a "variance" to re-open and find out about any additional measures that must be implemented during a boil water advisory.

Water Treatment Devices

Most water treatment devices installed on building water supply systems or taps are not designed to treat water for the kind of acute health-related contaminants addressed by a boil water advisory. Most are designed to deal with non-health related (aesthetic) water quality concerns, including taste, odour and hardness. Even if you normally use a water treatment device, follow the boil water advisory instructions to ensure the water is safe.

If you know a boil water advisory is expected to remain in effect for an extended time, a commercial or public facility may want to install a water treatment system to continue distribution. You must get written approval from the Office of Drinking Water before installing the equipment. Contact the Office of Drinking Water for more information (contact information at the end of this fact sheet).

What to do when a boil water advisory has been lifted

When the water is considered safe to drink, the boil water advisory will be lifted. A public notice will be distributed to all water users. Follow all instructions stated in the notice. If the notice does not state special instructions, you must follow these guidelines:

1. Flush out the building's water pipes to ensure they contain safe water before using them. To do this, turn on one hot water tap and let it run until the water is cold. This will drain the hot water heater and refill it with safe water.
2. Then, turn on all your cold water taps, faucets, fountains, showerheads and outside hose spigots and let them run for five minutes.
3. Clean faucet screens and aerators on all taps.
4. Flush, clean and sanitize water lines on equipment such as beverage machines, coffee machines and ice machines with clean water. Follow manufacturers' instructions.
5. Replace (do not just clean) water filter cartridges on taps and in water containers.
6. Flush, clean and sanitize any other water-using fixture or equipment using manufacturers' instructions.
7. Clean and sanitize all food preparation, dispensing and preparation equipment (ex: ice machines, soda fountains, ice cream dispensers) following manufacturers' instructions. This includes any in-line, pre-treatment devices. If you need help or information, contact the company that installed the equipment.
8. Clean and sanitize sprayers or misters using manufacturers' instructions.
9. Flush and sanitize water treatment devices using manufacturers' instructions. Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle. Replace any water filter cartridges in treatment devices. If you have a private water system, contact the regional drinking water officer or public health inspector about water testing, before using water again.
10. Use the clean water to make one batch of ice then dump the batch.

Contact your local public health inspector to discuss these guidelines.

Chlorine Bleach and Sanitizing Solutions

Instructions for chlorine bleach solution – for hand washing:

Mix:

- 5 millilitres (1 teaspoon) of unscented household bleach

With:

- 4 litres (1 gallon) of boiled or commercial bottled water (from an approved source)

Let the solution stand for at least 10 minutes and store in small clean containers. Clean plastic or glass bottles that have hand pumps work well.

Instructions for sanitizing solution – for dishes and counters:

Mix:

- 10 millilitres (2 teaspoons) of unscented household bleach

With:

- 4 litres (1 gallon) of boiled or commercial bottled water (from a safe water source)

Let the solution stand for at least 10 minutes and store in small clean containers. Clean plastic or glass bottles that have hand pumps work well.

NOTE:

- **Label all containers: "Bleach/chlorine -- do not drink."**
- **Make the solutions fresh every day – don't store them overnight.**

For more information

For more information on drinking water safety, water treatment devices or to receive a copy of other drinking water fact sheets, please visit the Office of Drinking Water website at www.manitoba.ca/drinkingwater or contact the Private Well, Education and Outreach Co-ordinator at 204-948-1351. To locate a local office near you, please refer to the website at www.manitoba.ca/waterstewardship/odw/reg-contacts/index.html.

For information on certification for water treatment devices, visit www.nsf.org.

For information on well driller reports, well construction or sealing of unused wells, contact Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, Groundwater Management Section at 204-945-6959.

For health information, contact Health Links at 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg; toll free at 1-888-315-9257 or contact your local public health office. To find your nearest office, go to: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html.

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