

Frequently Asked Questions for Food Establishments During a Boil Water Notice

April 2023

What is Boil Water Notice?

Boil water notices are public announcements advising the public that they should boil tap water before drinking or using it to prepare food. Notices are issued when tap water may be contaminated with disease-causing organisms.

Does this Notice affect establishments preparing and selling foods?

Yes.

Potable water is required for many aspects of food preparation, cooking and cleaning. Due to the additional risk, food establishment operators like you are requested to take a more stringent approach to this advisory. You will need to consider if you can provide adequate potable water, if not then consider closing. If unsure, contact your local Environmental Health Officer.

Does the Notice affect food preparation in a food establishment?

Yes.

- If using tap water in your food product, **the minimum internal temperature of the food item must reach 74°C or higher.**
- If using tap water to cook your food product, ensure that the water is brought to a rolling boil for a minimum of one minute.
- Bottled or boiled water must be used when washing ready to eat food products that will not be cooked afterward or pre-washed items must be purchased.
- Tap water may be used to thaw food in a preparation sink, as long as the food is cooked afterward and reaches a minimum internal temperature of **74°C or higher.**
- Containers used to hold water must be food grade and must not have previously held food allergens such as dairy, egg, wheat, or nut products.



What is the accepted method for boiling water?

- Bring water in a pot to a rolling boil for one minute. You can improve the flat taste of boiled water by pouring it back and forth from one container to another and/or allowing it to stand for a few hours.
- Boil as much water in a pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling. Caution should always be exercised when handling boiling water to minimize the risk of burns.
- Provide adequate protection against contamination of the water after boiling.

Can chemically disinfected water be used?

- Disinfecting your tap water instead of boiling is a safer way to prepare large quantities of water for kitchen use.
- Water can be prepared in large 22.5L (5 gallons) containers first thing in the morning. Use a ratio of 2 drops (0.1 mL) of unscented bleach (5.25%) per one liter of room temperature water, mixed well, and let it stand for a minimum 30 minutes to allow for contact time.

What should be done with food products produced during the water advisory?

- There should be no problems if the product reached an internal temperature of 74°C or higher during the cooking stage.
- To be safe, products that did not undergo a cooking/pasteurization stage should be discarded.
- Any beverages or uncooked foods that have been prepared using possibly contaminated tap water should be thrown out.

What can be done with ice, ice making, beverage dispensers, and water units?

- Ice that was bagged or made prior to the issuance of the water advisory may be used.
- Ice produced in ice machines after the advisory must be discarded, the machines must be cleaned & sanitized and not be restarted until the Notice is rescinded.
- Disconnect or turn off water vending machines, drinking fountains, ice/syrup machines, produce misters, ice making units and soda machines to prevent their use.
- Grocery stores must not use automatic misting machines on produce.
- Not all water treatment systems are certified to remove bacteria, viruses and protozoa. Some are designed for chemical removal while others are designed for aesthetic improvements. If the manufacturer cannot assure safety, then the water should be boiled before use.
- In-line filters should be backwashed or replaced after the Notice is rescinded. Discontinue the use of dipper wells. Use a separate, regularly sanitized scoop for each flavor (to avoid consumer exposure to allergens) until the Boil Water Notice is rescinded and use of the dipper well can resume.



The food premises has a dishwasher. Is it safe to use?

Yes.

- You can continue to use your high temperature (82oC) rinse commercial dishwasher. If you are using a low temperature chemical dishwasher ensure that the sanitize rinse cycle is fully operational and your sanitizer concentration is adequate.
- Alternatively, use single service utensils and dishware for customers.

Can manual dishwashing practice be continued?

Yes.

- You can utilize the approved three-compartment sink dishwashing method to manually wash, rinse and sanitize food equipment and cooking utensils. Washed dishes must be sanitized by immersing them in a 100ppm chlorine solution for 30 seconds before air dry.
- Alternatively, use single service utensils and dishware for customers.

Can the water be used for hand washing?

Yes.

- Use proper hand washing techniques and be extra diligent when washing hands.
- Wearing plastic gloves does not replace good hand washing when preparing foods.

Can the tap water be used for cleaning?

Yes.

- Ensure that you are using an appropriate concentration of sanitizing agent. This can be verified by using test strips or by following manufacturer's instructions.
- Food contact surfaces should be cleaned with clean water and then sanitized using an acceptable sanitizing agent. Sanitizing agents for food contact surfaces include; unscented regular household bleach (5.25%), iodophors, and quaternary ammonia compounds (QUATS).
- To prepare stock bleach solutions add 2-4 mL of 5.25% bleach per liter of water (1/2 teaspoon per litre). This will make a 100 to 200 ppm chlorine solution.

What should be done with beverages?

- Coffee machines usually produce water around 70 to 80 degrees Celsius, which is sufficient to destroy disease causing microorganisms. However, a sufficient amount of time is needed to ensure that all harmful organisms are destroyed. Therefore let the coffee stand in the machine for at least five minutes before drinking.
- Percolated coffee and tea are safe to serve since the water is boiled before use.



- Discontinue mixed cold beverages containing water unless you are using bottled/boiled water or substitute with canned products.
- Discontinue the use of drinking fountains.
- Serve bottled or boiled water to your customers.

Should we change the way that we launder our linens in any way?

No.

- It has been demonstrated that normal washing and drying cycles are adequate in sanitizing linens.

What happens after the boil water notice is rescinded?

- Re-start, flush and sanitize any water-using fixture or piece of equipment in accordance with the manufacturers' specifications. This may vary from fixture to fixture. Remember to include misters, icemakers (discard the first bin full), and beverage machines.
- Run cold water faucets and drinking fountains for at least 3 minutes each if they have not been used in the last 24 hours.

How will the public know when the boil water notice is lifted?

- Once it has been determined that the water is safe to drink, the Medical Health Officer will issue a statement through the media.

If you have any questions regarding your establishment and Boil Water Notice, please contact your local health unit.

Health Protection Offices:

Service Area	Phone
Central Coast & West Chilcotin	604-983-6793
North Shore	604-983-6793
Powell River	604-485-3310
Richmond	604-233-3147
Sunshine Coast	604-885-5164
Squamish	604-892-2293
Vancouver	604-675-3800
Whistler	604-932-3202

