

ATTACHMENT 2

Frequently Asked Questions during a Boil Water Advisory or a Boil Water Notice

Background Questions

What is a Boil Water Notice or Advisory?

A Boil Water Notice or Advisory is a public statement advising customers to boil tap water before consuming it. Advisories are issued when an event has occurred that creates a potential situation for the water distribution system to become contaminated. BWAs are often issued after pressure loss due to a main break repair. An advisory does not mean the water is contaminated, but rather alerts the customer to the possibility that it could be contaminated. Because the water quality is unknown, customers should assume the water may be unsafe to drink and should take the appropriate precautions.

During an advisory, chances are if an individual is in good health, he or she will not get sick from drinking the water. However, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems are more vulnerable and should not drink the water until it is deemed safe to drink.

What is a Boil Water Order?

Boil Water Orders) are more serious. They are typically authorized by the regulating agency when a known microbial contaminant such as *E. coli* is in the water or a malfunction of critical treatment. Customers are required to boil tap water before consuming it.

How does Jacobs inform customers about boil-water notices or advisories?

We use a variety of methods to communicate boil notices or advisories. They can include water department staff delivering fliers or dropping off door-hangers to individual homes in the affected area or making telephone calls to large water users such as hospitals, day care centers, nursing homes, and restaurants. Some locations have reverse 911 capabilities or electronic notification through texting and emails. If localized, notices may also be posted in common areas such as libraries, post offices, grocery stores, etc. If widespread, media announcements will occur on local radio stations, television, and newspapers.

The same methods are used to notify customers that the notice has ended.

How long must a Boil Water Advisory or Notice be in effect?

An advisory or notice will remain in effect until bacteria test results show the water is safe to drink. A boil advisory is expected to last a minimum of 24 hours but can be longer and may last several days if additional bacteria samples are required. Each set of bacteria tests take 24 hours to analyze.

Questions customers might ask

I already drank the water. Will I get sick?

Most people who drink the water will not get sick. If you do get sick, the symptoms are similar to food poisoning: nausea, diarrhea, cramps, and possibly a mild fever. Symptoms can occur as early as a few hours to several days. However, these symptoms are not just associated with disease causing organisms in drinking water; they may also be caused by many other factors such as eating tainted food or improper hygiene. You should contact or visit your physician if you begin to experience these symptoms.

What should I do during a Boil Water Advisory or Notice?

Boiling is considered to be the safest and most effective method of water disinfection. Vigorous boiling for 1 minute will kill disease-causing microorganisms and parasites that may be present in the water supply. You should boil tap water vigorously for at least 1 full minute prior to using it for drinking or cooking (the minute starts when the water comes to a full rolling boil). Wait for the water to cool before using it or store it in the refrigerator in a clean container. You should throw away ice made during the time the advisory or notice was issued, as freezing does not kill bacteria. In lieu of boiling, you may purchase bottled water or get water from another approved suitable source. The table below provides specific guidance as to which activities require or don't require boiled water during a boil water advisory or notice.

Activities that do require boiled water:	Activities that do not require boiled water:
Drinking	Showering (do not allow water in mouth)
Washing food served without cooking/baking	Tub bathing (do not allow water in mouth)
Adding water to food without cooking/baking (washing vegetables and fruit)	Household dishwashers - use hot water rinse or sanitizing cycle
Ice making	Laundry
Cleaning food contact surfaces	General cleaning, mopping
Gargling	Hand washing
Eye washing	Pet watering (optional)
Taking water with medications	Pet bathing
Tooth brushing	Plant water/irrigation
Making baby formula	Shaving
Making coffee, tea, lemonade, etc.	

Can I use my dishwasher during the advisory?

Dishwashers are safe to use if the water reaches a temperature at least 113 °F for 20 minutes or 122 °F for 5 minutes or 162 °F for 1 minute or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.

Do I still need to boil my water if I have a filter system on my faucet or refrigerator?

Most home filters are designed to improve the aesthetics of water (improve taste and odor), not remove bacteria. You can learn about the capability of your filter by contacting the manufacturer or [NSF International](#), an independent testing group located in Ann Arbor, Michigan (800-673-8010). If in doubt, you should boil your water or use bottled water even if you have a filtering system.

Do I still need to boil my water if I have a water softener or sediment filter in my home?

Yes, softeners and sediment filters are not designed to remove bacteria.

What about my pet? Is it safe for my pet to drink the water?

Pets have some innate protection for this type of water contamination. However, some people will prefer to boil and then cool water for their pets to drink for safety.

Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g., reptiles, frogs)?

Most incidents would not affect reptiles or fish. If your water system is using more chlorine or changing disinfection, be cautious about changing the water in your fish tank or aquarium. Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more advice.

What should I do about feeding my baby?

It is ok to breastfeed your baby. Another option is to use ready-to-use formula. If you are bottle feeding with powdered or concentrated formula, mix it with bottled water. Wash bottles and nipples before use with bottled water or boiled water. If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

Questions for public facilities

I own a restaurant. What do I need to do?

Restaurants need to observe the boil water notice. Water served to customers must be boiled for at least 1 minute. This includes water used for ice making, table water, food preparation, and rinsing dishes. Tap water combined with dish soap can be used to clean dishes, utensils, and cooking ware provided it is rinsed with boiled water. Boiled water must be used to rinse and clean kitchen and dining room surfaces. Coffee makers and soda dispensers must be shut down if they are attached to the water supply. Ice made just prior to the boil advisory should be discarded. Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers. Throw out all ice made with tap water. Make new ice with bottled or boiled water and/or purchase commercially bagged ice. Uncooked foods prepared just before the advisory should either be discarded or rewashed using boil water that has been cooled down. Restaurants should contact their local health department for more guidance.

I manage a grocery store. What precautions should I take?

Water sprayers located in the produce section must be shut down. Produce should be rinsed with boiled tap water that has been cooled or use another approved source of water not associated with the tap water.

I am a school principal. What precautions should I take for the children?

Schools should shut all drinking water fountains or place a plastic bag over all fountains if there are no shut-off valves. Bottled water should be supplied to all classrooms while school is in session. Schools with cafeterias should follow the above instructions provided to restaurants. Ice made just prior to the boil water advisory should be discarded. Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers. Throw out all ice made with tap water. Make new ice with bottled or boiled water and/or purchase commercially bagged ice.

What should we do after a Boil Water Advisory or Notice has been lifted?

After an advisory or notice has been lifted, you should flush household pipes, ice makers, water fountains, etc. prior to using them for drinking or cooking. Flushing simply means letting the water run to ensure that no contaminated water remains in your pipes. Follow these guidelines for flushing:

- Run all cold water faucets in your home for 1 minute
- To flush automatic ice makers, make 3 batches of ice and discard
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle
- Run drinking water fountains for 1 minute
- Run water coolers with direct water connections for 5 minutes

The following additional FAQ should only be used during a Boil Water Order if *E. coli* is found in the water.

If a boil water order is issued due to *E. coli* bacteria: *E. coli* is a subgroup of the fecal coliform bacteria group. There are many strains of *E. coli*, most of which are harmless, but some strains can cause illness. *E. coli* outbreaks receive much media coverage. Most outbreaks have been related to food contamination (not water) caused by a specific strain of *E. coli* known as *E. coli* O157:H7. When a drinking water sample is reported as “*E. coli* positive,” it does not mean that this specific strain is present and in fact, it probably is not present. However, it does indicate recent fecal contamination. Boiling contaminated drinking water for 1 minute destroys all forms of *E. coli*, including O157:H7.