

Food Establishment and School Operations During a Boil Water Advisory



The treatments described below work only in situations when a boil water advisory has been issued because of the presence of bacteria.

If potable water is not available and the following procedures cannot be met, the establishment or facility must close. Potable water means boiled water (boiled at a rolling boil 3-5 minutes) or water from an approved source (e.g., bottled water).

Handwashing (follow either option):

- Use potable water for handwashing by providing a temporary handwashing station supplied with warm potable water in an insulated container with a free-flowing spigot. Soap, paper towels or hand dryers, and a container for waste water must also be provided; **OR**
- Use warm tap water and soap for handwashing. **After hands are rinsed and dried, follow with a liquid hand sanitizer.** The hand sanitizer must be used as an additional step; it does not replace proper handwashing.

Food Preparation:

- If using tap water in your food product, the minimum internal temperature must reach 165 degrees Fahrenheit, or potable water must be used.
- Potable water must be used when washing 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 product is cooked afterward and reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Ice made from tap water must be discarded, and the ice machine/ice bins must be sanitized once the boil water order has been lifted. All ice, including bagged ice, must be from an approved source.
- Produce misters must be discontinued.

Utensil Washing/Sanitizers:

- Test dishwashers to verify sanitizers are within the proper range (mechanical and manual). High temperature dishwashers must reach 160 degrees Fahrenheit on the surface of the utensil. Sanitizing solutions must be 50-200 ppm chlorine, 200-400 ppm quaternary ammonium, or 12.5-25 ppm iodine.
- Test sanitizing solutions routinely with test strips.
- Single service utensils may be used.
- Discontinue the use of dipper wells.

Beverages:

- Coffee and hot drinks must reach a minimum temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Mixed beverages containing water must be discontinued (e.g., pop dispensers connected to water supply).
- Canned or bottled beverages may be substituted.
- Discontinue the use of drinking fountains.

Schools should follow these additional precautions:

- Advise people using the showers to avoid swallowing water.
- Discontinue the use of drinking fountains and other plumbing fixtures used to provide drinking water to students and staff.
- Follow handwashing options outlined above.

Preparing for the boil water advisory to be lifted:

During a boil water advisory, the water purveyor will chlorinate the water distribution system and there will be a chlorine smell present. When this happens, turn on all the drinking fountains, hot and cold water faucets, showers, etc., in your facility until you smell chlorine. This will allow the chlorinated water to contact the piping that may have contained contaminated water. Once the boil water advisory has been lifted, follow the additional actions listed below.

Actions necessary after boil water advisory has been lifted:

- Food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized.
- Food processing equipment that uses tap water (e.g., juice machines, produce misters, etc.) must be flushed with chlorinated water of adequate concentration (50-200 ppm).

For Further Information Contact:

DOH Office of Drinking Water (ODW) 456-3115

Spokane Regional Health District Food Program 324-1560, ext. 2

Spokane Regional Health District School Program 324-1560, ext. 4

If you are not sure whether your facility is affected, contact your water purveyor. (Your current water bill will identify your water purveyor.)

Your water purveyor will give notification when the boil water advisory has been lifted and the water is safe for use.

