

DRINKING WATER PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

What Food Premises Operators Need to Know

What is a Public Notification (advisory)?

A public notification from a water supplier advises the public to take precautions with the water used for drinking and food preparation. The notifications explain potential threats from the consumption of drinking water.

What do I need to do?

Providing potable water is a requirement for operation. **If a sufficient supply of potable water cannot be provided, you must close your facility.**

Notifying your customers is also a requirement of the *Drinking Water Protection Regulation*. **This means you must post signs at every sink and anywhere drinking water is available to the public and, where practical, to verbally advise customers.** By keeping your customers informed, you maintain their trust and satisfaction.

Are all Public Notifications (advisories) the same?

No, there are a different notification types. The most common types are:

A **Water Quality Advisory** is issued as a precautionary measure when there is a low level health risk to drinking water users.

- Food premises operators **MUST advise clients** and **MAY WISH to provide alternate water**. *Note: vulnerable groups (children, elderly, immunocompromised), should follow Boil Water Notice precautions.*

A **Boil Water Notice** is issued when there is a health risk to drinking water users.

- Food premises operators **MUST advise their clients** and **MUST provide water that is safe to consume**.

My water is on a Boil Water Notice - Can I continue to operate?

You may continue to operate if you take the appropriate precautions. Provide safe drinking water to your customers and prepare food using an acceptable source of water. Refer to Table 1 for details.

Disconnect equipment that is connected to water lines including ice makers, pop machines, drinking water fountains, self-serve bulk water dispensers, ice-cream scoop dipper wells and produce spray misters. Machines used to dispense cold beverages must not be used.

Equipment that may remain connected to the water lines are water faucets, hot water tanks, hot water towers, coffee machines and mechanical dishwashers.

How do I make tap water safe?

Bring water to a rolling boil for at least one minute. Cool and store the water in food grade containers. This water can be used for drinking, to prepare cold beverages or for ice. Commercially bottled water is also acceptable.

Can I use a water filter to treat the water instead of boiling?

No. During an emergency event, point-of-use/point-of-entry filtration alone may not be sufficient to make the water safe.

Can I use a point-of-use/point-of-entry (POU/POE) treatment system in an emergency?

You may be able to use a POU/POE system if it has been reviewed and approved for use by your Environmental Health Officer (EHO). In recognition of the unpredictable nature of emergencies, not all treatment systems will be suitable for all emergencies. Please contact your EHO to determine if your approved POU/POE will produce safe drinking water during a specific emergency event.

Due to limited resources and the time required for review, approval for POU/POE treatment systems will not be conducted during an emergency. For more information on emergency response planning and pre-approval of POU/POE treatment systems in advance of an emergency, contact your local [Population Health Operations office](#).

What about water for food preparation?

Boiled or bottled water must be used for washing ready-to-eat foods or preparing foods that will not be cooked. Tap water may be acceptable for preparing hot beverages and cooked foods.

Table 1. Safe sources of drinking water and water for food preparation

| Food | Must use: Boiled Tap Water or Bottled Water | Can I use Water Straight From the Tap? |
|---|---|--|
| Drinking water | ✓ | ✗ |
| Ice | ✓ or commercial manufacturer | ✗ |
| Cold beverages (made from concentrate or powder) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Hot beverages (coffee, tea, hot chocolate) | ✓ | ✓ If tap water is heated in a machine to a temperature above 74°C for at least 15 seconds and the temperature is verified using a thermometer. |
| Food preparation (wash, rinse or soak ready-to-eat foods, fruits and vegetables) | ✓ or commercially washed and packaged produce | ✗ |
| Water used as an ingredient in food that will not be cooked | ✓ | ✗ |
| Water used as an ingredient in food that will be cooked to at least 74°C (e.g. soup) or food that will be boiled in water (e.g. potatoes, pasta etc.) | ✓ | ✓ |

What is acceptable for hand washing and general cleaning?

Untreated tap water is acceptable for these procedures. Use a hand sanitizer (60% ethyl alcohol) after washing hands.

For dishwashing and general cleaning & sanitizing, tap water may be used. Sanitizing processes must follow those outlined in your Sanitation Plan.

Contact your water supplier or Environmental Health Officer if you have any questions.

Interior Health Resources:

Drinking Water Advisories:

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/DrinkingWater/Pages/WaterAdvisories.aspx>