



COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING BOIL WATER NOTICES

What is the proper way to disinfect my water so that it is safe to drink?

The preferred method of treatment is boiling. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Freezing will not disinfect water. Bring water to a full rolling boil for at least one minute to kill most infectious organisms (germs). For areas without power, disinfect the tap water by adding eight drops, about one-eighth teaspoon, of ordinary household bleach (free of fragrances and additives) per gallon of water and allow the water to stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, repeat the procedure. If your well was flooded, boiling the water is the safest action, since disinfection does not kill certain parasites.

How should I wash my hands during a boil water notice?

It is recommended that you wash your hands using soap and either bottled water or pre-boiled water. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer may also be used.

Is potentially contaminated water (where *Cryptosporidium* is not the significant contaminant) safe for washing dishes or clothes?

Yes, if you rinse hand-washed dishes for a minute in a bleach solution (one tablespoon bleach per gallon of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry. Most household dishwashers do not reach the proper temperature to sanitize dishes. It is safe to wash clothes in tap water.

Should I boil tap water for brushing my teeth?

Yes. Any tap water that might be swallowed should be boiled before use.

Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?

The water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, so long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water in eyes or nose or mouth. Children and disabled individuals should have their bath supervised to ensure water is not ingested. The time spent bathing should be minimized. Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who have recent surgical wounds, are immuno-suppressed or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water for cleansing until the notice is lifted.

How should I wash fruit and vegetables and make ice?

Fruits and vegetables should be washed with boiled (then cooled water) or bottled water or water sanitized with eight drops (about one-eighth teaspoon) of bleach per gallon of water. Ice should be made with boiled water, bottled water or sanitized water.

What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?

Even if someone has consumed potentially contaminated water from either a public water system or a private well before they were aware of the boil water notice, the likelihood of becoming ill is low. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should seek medical attention.

What infectious organisms might be present in contaminated water?

Disease transmission from contaminated water occurs principally by ingesting water. The major organisms of concern are protozoa such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium and bacteria, such as Shigella, E. coli and viruses. These organisms primarily impact the gastrointestinal system, causing diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting, with or without fever. Most of these illnesses are not usually serious or life threatening except the elderly, the very young or those who are immunocompromised.

Can I haul water from my neighbor's well or spring for drinking?

No. You should only use water from an approved, tested source. Without routinely testing the water, there is no way to know if the water is safe to drink.

Do I still need to boil tap water if I have a water treatment device?

Yes. Devices designed to improve the taste, odor or chemical quality of the water will not remove harmful microorganisms from the tap water. Boil the tap water to make sure it is safe.

How will I know when it is safe to drink my tap water?

You will be notified when tests show that the tap water is safe to drink. You may be asked to run water to flush the pipes in your home before using your tap water or be given other instructions. Until you are notified, continue to boil all tap water for one minute before use.