

Boil Water Advisory Fact Sheet

What is a boil water advisory?

A boil water advisory is issued when harmful germs (e.g., E. coli bacteria, Giardia parasite) may be in a drinking water supply. Drinking water contaminated with these germs can make people and animals very sick. Boiling will kill the germs and make the water safe to drink.

E. coli is a type of bacteria that normally lives in the intestines of humans and some animals. While most types of E. coli are harmless, some may cause disease. The presence of E. coli indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal waste. Human pathogens in these wastes can cause effects, such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a greater health risk for infants, young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with severely compromised immune systems.

What steps must a school take when a boil water advisory is issued?

- Safe water must be provided for students and staff.
- Signs should be posted at all faucets, including the entrance, kitchen area, and washrooms as a reminder of the boil water advisory and not to drink the water.
- Turn off or disconnect drinking fountains.
- Discard all ice or drinks made recently with tap water.
- While it is generally safe to wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 secs, out of an abundance of caution, use an approved water supply and soap to wash hands during a boil water advisory.
 - Bottled water or water from an approved supply must be used for hand washing. This can be accomplished by using a temporary hand washing station consisting of a five-gallon container with a spigot and a five gallon or greater bucket for retention. See instructions for creating a temporary water jug:
<https://dec.alaska.gov/media/9906/resources-food-guide-handwashing-station.pdf>.
- When soap and water are not available use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol content.

When a boil water advisory has been issued, how should the water be used?

- Boil water for at least one minute. Boiling water kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.
- Bring water to a rolling boil for one minute, then cool it before:
 - Drinking,
 - Brushing teeth,
 - Washing fruits and vegetables,
 - Preparing baby food and formula,
 - Taking oral medication, or rinsing off medical equipment when tap water is normally used or consider using sterile water,
 - Making ice,
 - Giving to pets,
 - Washing dishes, and
 - Food Preparation.
- When a boil water advisory has been issued, do not use the tap water for the above-mentioned activities.

Fact Sheet for Food Facilities Under A Boil Water Advisory

- Use bottled or [boiled water](#) for drinking, and to prepare and cook food.
- If bottled water is not available, bring **water to a full rolling boil for 1 minute**. After boiling, allow the water to cool before use.
- Boil tap water even if it is filtered.
- **Coffee makers, ice machines, or water or soda dispensers**
 - Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water lines. This includes the water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer.
 - Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or icemakers
 - Throw out all ice previously made with tap water
 - Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water to make coffee and ice.
 - When the boil water advisory is lifted, consult the manufacturer and/or manual to find out how to sanitize appliances.

- **Preparing food and beverages & food preparation surfaces**
 - Wash fruits and vegetables with bottled, boiled, or disinfected water.
 - Use bottled or boiled water that has cooled to cook food.
 - Wash food preparation surfaces with bottled, boiled, or disinfected water.

- **Handwashing**
 - Use bottled or boiled water to [wash hands](#).

- **Washing dishes**
 - If possible, use disposable plates, cups, and utensils during a boil water advisory.
 - Dishwashers generally are safe to use if:
 - The water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150 degrees Fahrenheit (66°Celsius), or
 - The dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.
 - To wash dishes by hand:
 - Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
 - In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid bleach for each gallon of warm water.
 - Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least one minute.
 - Let the dishes air dry completely before using again.