

Boil Water Notices

Questions and Answers for food establishments

➤ **What is a boil water notice?**

Boil water notices are public announcements advising the public that they should boil tap water before drinking or using it to prepare food. Notices are issued by the water supplier when tap water may be contaminated with disease causing microorganisms.

➤ **May I continue to operate my business?**

You may continue to operate if you take the appropriate precautions. Food businesses are responsible for the safety of the water and the food they provide.

A public announcement will be made when the boil water notice has been lifted.

➤ **What precautions must I take?**

The following is a list of actions you must take while the boil water notice is in place:

- Provide your customers with safe drinking water and prepare foods using an acceptable source of water. Refer to Table 1 on page 3 for details.
- Disconnect equipment that is connected to water lines. This includes 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. The following may remain connected to the water lines; water faucets, hot water tanks, hot water towers, coffee machines and mechanical dishwashers.
- Notify your customers:
 - Post signs in the washroom advising customers not to drink the water.
 - Shut off drinking water fountains.
 - Verbally notify customers where applicable.



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➤ **What is a safe source of drinking water and ice?**

Tap water that is provided directly to customers or used to prepare cold beverages and ice must be first boiled. Commercially bottled water is also acceptable.

➤ **What is an acceptable source of 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. However, tap water may be acceptable for preparing hot beverages and cooked foods. Refer to the Table 1 on page 3 for details.

➤ **What is an acceptable source of water for handwashing, cleaning and sanitizing and washing dishes?**

Untreated tap water is acceptable for these procedures. The minimum requirements outlined in your Food Safety and Sanitation Plan must be followed. Refer to the Table 2 on page 4 for details.

➤ **What is an accepted method for boiling water?**

- Bring water to a rolling boil for at least one minute.
- Cool and store the water in food grade containers.

➤ **Will a water filter produce safe drinking water?**

Most water filtration devices installed on a building water supply system or taps are not designed to remove microorganisms from water. Most are designed to deal with non-health related water quality concerns including taste, odour and hardness. Filters can be a source of contamination if not properly maintained.

A point of entry or point of use water treatment system may provide a safe source of drinking water if it meets specific treatment standards. Contact your Environmental Health Officer if you use or are planning on installing a treatment system.

➤ **What action do I take when the boil water notice is lifted?**

A public announcement will be made when the boil water notice has been lifted. As equipment connected to water lines may have been contaminated you must take certain actions this includes:

- Run cold water faucets and drinking water fountains for 1 minute.
- Flush all pieces of equipment, or fixtures, connected to the water lines for 1 minute.
- Drain and refill hot water heaters.
- Drain and flush pressure tanks (if applicable).
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle (if applicable).
- Flush ice machines. Disconnect the water line from the ice machine and flush the line for 1 minute. Replace any in-line filters then reconnect the machine to the water line; make ice for 1 hour and dispose of the ice. Clean and sanitize surfaces that come into contact with water and ice.

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

Food or Beverages	Boiled tap water or Bottled water	Tap water	Alternative
Drinking water	✓		
Cold beverages prepared from concentrate (<i>juice</i>)	✓		Premixed, canned or bottled beverages.
Hot beverages (<i>tea, coffee and hot chocolate</i>)	✓		When tap water is heated in a machine that dispenses hot beverages it may be a safe alternative to boiled water. This includes hot water towers, coffee machines, hot cappuccino and hot chocolate machines. The water temperature must be maintained above 74°C for at least 15 seconds and the temperature must be verified using a thermometer.
Ice preparation	✓		Commercial manufacturer
Food preparation (<i>wash, rinse and soak ready to eat foods, fruits and vegetables</i>)	✓		Commercially washed and packaged produce, canned or frozen fruits and vegetables.
As an ingredient in food that will not be cooked (<i>dehydrated food</i>)	✓		
As an ingredient in food that will be cooked to at least 74°C (<i>soup</i>)		✓	
Preparing food that will be boiled in water (<i>potatoes, pasta</i>)		✓	

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Table 2 - Safe sources of water for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and dish washing

Procedure	Boiled tap water or Bottled water	Tap water	Alternative
Hand washing		✓ Use a hand sanitizer (60% ethyl alcohol) after washing hands	
Mechanical Dishwashers (<i>High temperature and chemical sanitizer</i>)		✓ The dishwasher must be operating according to the manufacturer's specifications and the sanitizing cycle must meet the minimum requirements described in your Sanitation Plan.	Single service dishes and utensils
Manual dishwashing		✓ You must follow the procedures outlined in your Sanitation Plan.	Single service dishes and utensils
Cleaning and sanitizing		✓ You must follow the procedures outlined in your Sanitation Plan.	

Contact your local Environmental Health Officer for additional information on operating your business during a boil water notice.

For other food related information visit the Fraser Health website at: www.fraserhealth.ca/foodsafety