



PUBLIC WORKS & WATER RESOURCES

CITY OF NEWARK

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BOIL WATER ADVISORY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A Boil Water Advisory is typically issued after a water main break repair, small or widespread loss of pressure in our water system, or a natural disaster. In some cases, our crews can repair a water main while maintaining adequate pressure to prevent contamination from entering the water distribution system. When we issue a Boil Water Advisory, we notify only the customers affected. If the risk of contamination is widespread, the City of Newark will arrange publicity in the news media, and post information on our website to inform the public. A boil water advisory will remain in effect until the City of Newark and the DHSS Office of Drinking Water both receive and approve test results that confirm the absence of bacterial contamination. These results are usually received 24 to 48 hours after the boil water advisory is in place.

This list includes questions most often asked during boil water advisories.

Why must I boil my water?

Your water may be contaminated by bacteria. The Boil Water Advisory gives you information so you can take action to protect your health.

Who can be affected?

Anyone who ingests contaminated water may become ill. Infants, young children, the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems are more at risk of illness.

How can I make my water safe?

Boiling the water is the best way to ensure that it is free of illness-causing organisms. Bring water to a rolling boil for a minimum of one minute. When it cools, refrigerate the water in clean containers. (A pinch of salt per quart may improve the rather flat taste of boiled water).

How should tap water be boiled properly?

Water should be placed in a heat-resistant container or in an electric kettle without an automatic shut-off and brought to a rolling boil for 1 minute to kill all disease-causing organisms.

Water can also be boiled in a microwave oven using a microwave-safe container, but it is advisable to include a glass rod or wooden or plastic stir stick in the container to prevent the formation of superheated water (water heated above its boiling point, without the formation of steam). The water should then be cooled and poured into a clean container or refrigerated until you are ready to use it.

Is it necessary to boil all water in the home during an advisory or order?

During boil water advisories or boil water orders, you should boil all water used for drinking, preparing food, beverages, ice cubes, washing fruits and vegetables, or brushing teeth. Infant formulas should be prepared using boiled tap water, at all times. In the event that boiling is not practical, the City may recommend an alternative supply known to be safe (e.g., bottled water) or may direct you to disinfect the water using household bleach.

It is not necessary to boil tap water used for other household purposes, such as showering, laundry, or bathing. Adults, teens, and older children can wash, bathe, or shower; however, they should avoid swallowing the water. Toddlers and infants should be sponge-bathed.

I have a water treatment device; do I still need to boil my drinking water?

Residential water treatment devices are generally used to improve the taste and odor of water and do not remove possible bacteria in the water. It is still necessary to boil the water even if it has been treated by an in-home filter. It is recommended that these systems be in bypass mode for the duration of the advisory and flushed according to manufacturer’s recommendations after the advisory is lifted.

Can I use bottled water?

Buying bottled water may be a feasible alternative to boiling water. Bottled water operations are routinely inspected, and samples are periodically analyzed to ensure they meet health standards.

What can I do with my tap water?

Drinking	No
Ice Cubes	No, and existing ice cubes should be thrown out. See below for information on ice machines.
Brushing Teeth	No
Baby's Formula	No
Washing Fruit/Vegetables	No
Preparing Food	No
Coffee, Tea, Lemonade, etc.	No. See below for information on soda dispensers and coffee makers.
Laundry	Yes
Watering Grass or Garden	Yes, but harvested fruits/vegetables must be washed using boiled or bottled water before consumption.
Washing Hands	See below
Showers or Baths	See below
Washing Dishes	See below

During a boil order, can I wash my hands using tap water?

It is recommended that you wash your hands using soap. If you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled or bottled water. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer may also be used.

During a boil order, can my family take showers or baths using tap water?

Yes, it is safe to take a bath or shower, but be careful not to swallow any water. Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

During a boil order, can I wash dishes using tap water?

You may use a dishwasher if it has a sanitizing cycle. Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150°F or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle. If it does not have a sanitizing cycle, or you are not sure if it does, you may hand wash dishes and utensils by following these steps:

1. Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.

2. In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid bleach for each gallon of warm water.
3. Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least 1 minute.
4. Let the dishes air dry completely.

Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, water or soda dispenser?

None of these devices should be used if they are directly connected to your water supply. Bottled and boiled water may be used in these devices. Also, filters are unacceptable for removing bacteria. Once you have been notified that the boil water advisory has been lifted, these devices should be cleaned and sanitized according to the operator's manual for the device.

Can I give my pets tap water?

Although pets are not normally affected by the same diseases as humans, caution suggests giving pets boiled or bottled water.

What are the symptoms of water-borne illness?

Disease symptoms may include diarrhea, cramps, nausea and possible jaundice and associated headaches and fatigue. Symptoms may appear as early as a few hours to several days after infection and may last more than two weeks. These symptoms, however, are not just associated with disease-causing organisms in drinking water; they may also be caused by a number of other factors. If you are ill with these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

What if I drank the water already?

There is nothing you can do about the exposure you may have already received. If you become ill, contact your health care provider. Follow the above recommendations about using your water until you are told the water is safe again.

How long will the boil order remain in effect?

Each boil order situation is different, making it impossible to predict how long the boil order will remain in effect. The minimum duration of a boil water advisory is 24 hours. It will not be lifted until testing shows that the water meets public health standards. Boil water advisories or boil water orders are lifted when the water is considered safe and no longer poses a threat to public health.

What should I do when the boil water advisory or order has been lifted?

Consumers should flush water pipes within the home. When flushing, it is important to carefully follow the instructions provided. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water before being used. Depending on the type of water treatment device, the filter may need to be replaced. Check with the manufacturer for details.

Where can I get more information?

[Delaware Office of Drinking Water](#) - The mission of the Office of Drinking Water is to protect the health of Delawareans by assuring safe drinking water through comprehensive monitoring, technical assistance and public education.

[Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water](#): CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.

[Hygiene and Handwashing](#): CDC provides guidance on alternative hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.

[A Guide to Water Filters](#): CDC maintains a guide for filters that remove *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia*.

EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791

[Consumer Information](#) : EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.