



## Iowa Department of Public Health Division of Environmental Health

### **Frequently Asked Questions About Boil Water Advisories (Residential)**

#### **Why do I need to boil my water?**

During a "boil water advisory", tap water is not safe for drinking and must be boiled. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.

#### **How can I make my water safe?**

During a boil advisory, either use bottled water or bring all tap water to a rolling boil for one minute, and then cool before using. Water should be stored in clean plastic containers and water coolers made of heavy opaque plastic with tight fitting screw lids. Avoid the use of used milk jugs, juice containers, sports bottles, etc.

#### **When should I use boiled tap water or bottled water?**

Boiled tap water or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing fruits and vegetables, baby formula, coffee, and food preparation until further notice. It is also recommended that you wash your hands using soap and either bottled water or boiled tap water.

#### **Can my family take showers or baths with tap water?**

The water may be used for showers and bathing as long as no water is swallowed. It is recommended that children be given a sponge bath using bottled water or water that has been boiled. People with open wounds or who are immune-compromised should avoid showering or bathing in contaminated tap water.

#### **Can I wash dishes using tap water?**

Dishes and utensils should be washed using bottled water or water that has been boiled.

#### **Can I give my pet tap water?**

Pets are not normally affected by the same diseases as humans, however caution would suggest giving pets bottled water or boiled tap water.

#### **What if I operate a restaurant?**

When a "boil water order" is issued by the DNR, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) requires that precautions be taken by all food service establishments in the affected areas. For more information about the operation of food service establishments during a water boil order, please contact DIA's Food and Consumer Safety Bureau at (515) 281-6538.

#### **Other questions?**

General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1(800) 426-4791.

*Information provided in part by:*



## Tier 1 Public Notification Requirements (Community Public Water Supplies)

A public water supply (PWS) that violates the acute coliform bacteria/nitrate/nitrite maximum contaminant level (MCL)/chlorine dioxide maximum residual disinfectant level (MRDL) must perform public notice within 24 hours after the system learns of the violation. During this same time period the water supply must contact the IDNR. Public notification rules for Tier 1 violations mandate both the content of written materials, as well as the timely delivery of those materials to all persons served by the PWS. Failure to conduct a correct and complete public notification program is a violation of the regulations established under the Safe Drinking Water Act, and is subject to enforcement action by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

Per Tier 1 public notification requirements, you must complete the following:

### Public Notification Content

Public notification must include the mandatory language in the example provided with these instructions. It must be multilingual, where appropriate. It should also be a clear explanation of the violation and include steps that the public water supply may be taking to correct the problem.

### Distribution Methods

By **month date, year** you must provide public notice that is designed to reach residential, transient, and non-transient users of your water system. In order to reach all persons served, your water system, at a minimum, must provide public notice that fits your system's specific situation using the following forms of delivery listed below.

**Broadcast Media** – Provide notice to radio or television stations that serve your system. Provide the name(s) of media used, date broadcast, and a copy of the notice.

**Posting** – Post notice in conspicuous locations throughout the area served by the water system. Provide the location(s) of the posting, the dates posted, and a copy of the notice.

**Hand Delivery** – Deliver copies of the notice by hand to all persons served by the water system. Provide the date notice was delivered and a copy of the notice.

**Consecutive Systems** – You are required to provide public notice to the owner(s) or operator(s) of all consecutive systems to whom you provide drinking water. Each consecutive system is responsible for providing public notice to the persons it serves, and must meet the appropriate Tier requirements as stated above.

**Additional Methods** – The water system may request the use of an additional delivery method not stated above. This method must be approved by the Department in writing.

Method and date completed \_\_\_\_\_ **{enclose copy of notice(s)}**

### Delivery Certification

I certify under penalty of law that I am familiar with the information submitted in this document and that it is true, accurate and complete.

Name (print or type) \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Within 10 days of completion of each public notification method used, you must send a signed copy of this certification form to the IDNR. You must include with this certification a representative copy of each type of notice distributed, published, posted, or made available to the persons served by the system or to the media. Send your public notification materials and certification forms to the following address:

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Water Supply Section  
401 SW 7<sup>th</sup> St., Suite M  
Des Moines, IA 50309-4611**

## DRINKING WATER WARNING

[System] water is contaminated with [fecal coliform] or [*E. coli*]

### BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING

Fecal coliform [or *E. coli*] bacteria were found in the water supply on [date]. These bacteria can make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune systems.

#### What should I do?

- **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST.** Bring all water to a boil, let it boil for one minute, and let it cool before using, or use bottled water. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation **until further notice**. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.
- *Fecal coliforms and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.*
- The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

#### What happened? What is being done?

Bacterial contamination can occur when increased run-off enters the drinking water source (for example, following heavy rains). It can also happen due to a break in the distribution system (pipes) or a failure in the water treatment process.

[Describe corrective action.] We will inform you when tests show no bacteria and you no longer need to boil your water. We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated time frame].

For more information, please contact [name of contact] at [phone number] or [mailing address]. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1(800) 426-4791.

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

This notice is being sent to you by [system].

PWSID#: \_\_\_\_\_. Date distributed:

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