



Valparaiso City Utilities

205 Billings St.

Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

"Water is our Most Valuable Natural Resource"

Commonly Asked Questions Regarding a Boil Water Advisory or Boil Water Order

1. What is a Boil Water Advisory and a Boil Water Order?

A "Boil Water Advisory" is a notification issued as a preventative measure. Boil water advisories are distributed if there is a possibility of bacterial contamination in the drinking water system that could make you sick.

A "Boil Water Order" is issued only when the laboratory testing confirms that the water is contaminated by harmful bacteria.

2. How soon will the boil water advisory be lifted?

After the water main break is fixed, it will take at least 48 hours for the laboratory to conduct the necessary testing, and to make sure the water is safe to use. It may take longer if additional testing is needed. When laboratory testing indicates no harmful bacteria are present in the water, the boil advisory will be lifted.

3. Should I use bottled water?

Water from an alternative water source is the best option during boil water advisory. When bottled water is available, it is a good alternative to boiling water.

4. What is the proper way to disinfect my water so that it is safe to drink or prepare other drinks like baby bottles, kool-aid, sun tea, ice tea, frozen juices etc.?

The best 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 5 minutes to kill most infectious organisms (germs).

For areas without power, disinfect the tap water by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 teaspoon) of plain unscented household bleach to 16 cups of water. Thoroughly mix the solution and allow the water to stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy, repeat the above process. Use a container that has a cap or cover for disinfecting and storing water to be used for drinking. This will prevent re-contamination.

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

No, none of these should be used if they are directly connected to your water supply. Use bottled water or water that has been boiled or disinfected for making coffee and ice. Also, filters do not work for removing bacteria. Once you have been notified that the boil water advisory has been lifted, these devices should be cleaned and disinfected according to the operator's manual for the device.

6. Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?

No. Do not use tap water to brush your teeth. Use bottled water or water that has been boiled as you would for drinking.

7. How should I wash my hands during a boil water advisory?

Vigorous hand washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. However, if you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled (then cooled) water or bottled water with hand washing soap.

8. Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes or clothes?

Yes, if you thoroughly rinse hand-washed dishes for a minute in a bleach solution (1 tablespoon bleach per gallon of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry.

Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150 degrees (Fahrenheit) or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle. When in doubt, don't use dishwasher and wash dishes by hand.

9. Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?

The water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, if absolutely necessary 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 immunosuppressed, or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water for cleansing until the advisory is lifted.

10. How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces or make ice?

Fruits and vegetables should be washed with boiled (then cooled water) or bottled water or water sanitized with 8 drops (about 1/8 teaspoon) of unscented household bleach per gallon of water. Also, use boiled water to wash surfaces where food is prepared. Ice should be made with boiled water or bottled water.

11. What do I do with food and drink prepared during the advisory?

Throw away uncooked food, beverages or ice cubes if made or prepared using tap water during the day of the advisory.

12. How does a boil water advisory affect feeding my infant?

Mothers who are breastfeeding should continue to breastfeed their babies. All baby bottles and nipples must be washed and sterilized before each use. If this is not possible, then single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles of formula must be used with a sterilized nipple. Always boil water before mixing concentrated liquid or powdered formula.

13. What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?

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

14. Is potentially contaminated water safe for household pets?

The same precautions that are taken to protect humans should be applied to household pets.

Fish and other animals living in water should not be exposed to potentially contaminated water. If the animal's water needs to be changed use boiled or bottled water.

15. What should I do when a water boil advisory is lifted?

It is confirmed that the water is safe to use. You don't need to do anything.

16. What should I do if a water boil advisory becomes water boil order?

If the bacteria testing results come back positive, it indicates that the water is contaminated by harmful bacteria (Fecal Coliform or E. Coli). These bacteria can make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune system.

You are REQUIRED to boil your water. All the procedures listed for water boil advisory need to be followed until further notice from Valparaiso City Utilities.

17. What should homeowners do when the water boil order is lifted?

- Flush household pipes/faucets first: To flush your plumbing, run all your cold water faucets on full for at least 5 minutes each. If your service connection is long or complex (like in an apartment building) consider flushing for a longer period. Your building superintendent or landlord should be able to advise you on longer flushing times.
- Automatic ice makers: Dump existing ice and flush the water feed lines by making and discarding three batches of ice cubes. Wipe down the ice bin with a disinfectant. If your water feed line to the machine is longer than 20 feet, increase to five batches.
- Hot water heaters, water coolers, in line filters, and other appliances with direct water connections or water tanks: Run enough water to completely replace at least one full volume of all lines and tanks. If your filters are near the end of their life, replace them.
- Water softeners: Run through a regeneration cycle.
- Reverse Osmosis (RO) units: Replace pre-filters, check owner's manual.
- Replace other water filters, as they are disposable and may be contaminated. This applies especially to carbon filters and others that are near the end of their life.

18. Where can I get additional information?

[Personal Water Use](#) - CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as its preparation and storage during an emergency.

[Hygiene and Sanitation](#) - 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 oocysts.