



Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department Boil Water Notices Guidelines

(Information from WVDHHR Office of Environmental Health & the WOCHD)

Frequently Boil Water Notices (BWN) are issued by the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department, WV Bureau for Public Health or the Public Water System when a situation occurs which might result in a public health concern. When BWNs are issued precautions should be taken to provide safe and satisfactory potable water.

Water used for cooking, drinking, washing vegetables, cleaning food contact surfaces, making ice, or for personal hygiene must be disinfected by one of the following means:

1. Heating the water to a rolling boil and maintaining rolling boil for one (1) minute.
2. Adding ten (10) drops of regular household laundry bleach (5¼ % sodium hypochlorite) to each gallon of clear water. Stir and allow the water to stand for at least thirty (30) minutes before using.
3. Providing bottled water or packaged water from an approved source.
4. Transporting potable water, unaffected by the Boil Water Notice, to the establishment in approved water transport vehicles.

If ice was produced in the ice machine during the time of the BWN, discard the ice and shut off water to the ice machine. Ice must be obtained from sources unaffected by the BWN. Once the BWN has been lifted, flush, clean, and sanitize with a dilute bleach solution (1 tablespoon of 5¼ % bleach per 1 gallon of water) all machines before putting into operation.

Equipment with a direct connection (hard plumbed) to potable water shall not be used while the BWN is in effect. When this equipment is accessible to the public during a BWN, “Do Not Use” signs shall be posted.

These types of equipment include, but are not limited to: soft drink fountain machines; coffee, tea, and cappuccino machines; dipper wells; and cooking kettles.

Drinking fountains must be turned off and “Do Not Drink” signs shall be posted at each drinking fountain.

Water used for personal hygiene (hand-washing, bathing, tooth-brushing) must be potable. All sinks designated for hand-washing shall be turned off and “Do Not Use” signs posted at each hand-sink. Hand sanitizer or anti-bacterial moist towelettes must be provided for handwashing in public restrooms.

Food establishments shall set up handwashing stations in food preparation areas and restrooms used by employees. Potable water for handwashing shall be dispensed from a container with a spigot. Boiled water or bottled water must be used for this purpose. If no water is available for any extended period of time (greater than 4 hours), the facility must cease operation.

Facilities which prepare food should utilize single service tableware and single-use kitchenware (aluminum pans) to minimize ware washing in the three compartment sink. Dishwashers may be utilized; however, manual sanitizing to 100 ppm chlorine in the three compartment sink must follow the dishwashing process. When utilizing the three compartment sink, boiled or bottled water must be used and changed as often as needed. Grocery stores which have misters in the produce department must shut them off during the BWN, unless the misters are on a reverse osmosis system.

In motels, hotels, institutions, and other facilities where people reside, adequate potable water must be provided for drinking and personal hygiene purposes. “Do Not Drink or Use Water” signs must be posted throughout the facility.

Water from a public water system under BWN may be utilized only for flushing of toilets and cleaning of floors, parking lots, etc. Personnel using water for cleaning purposes should wear disposable gloves while cleaning.

Individuals or facilities with additional questions should contact their local health department or the Public Health Sanitation Division (304) 558-2981. Any establishment or facility that cannot meet these guidelines must voluntarily close until the BWN is lifted by the appropriate authority. Facilities which cannot assure safe, potable water and refuse to voluntarily close will be ordered to cease operations by the Local Health Department. Local Health Officers, Boards of Health, and Environmental Health staff may modify or alter the above guidelines as deemed necessary to protect the public’s health.

Since boil orders are issued to protect citizen's health and serve as a notice of caution to the public, listen to the radio for boil order announcements or check the newspaper to see if a boil order is upcoming due to work on water lines or the flushing of water lines.

During a boil order a water system will take samples of the water and test them for bacteria, which take about 24 hours. Usually two sets are taken, therefore, the minimum time to receive test results and lift the boil order would be 48 hours.

If a boil order has been issued:

For Food Establishments

- cease operations until the boil order has been lifted, OR
- obtain an alternate supply of potable water and/or ice, AND
- follow satisfactory procedures for hand washing, food preparation, equipment cleaning, and sanitation
- Drinking water - use bottled water only, disconnect water fountains/machines, and post DO NOT DRINK signs
- Ice - shut off water lines to ice machine and discard ice produced during boil order; obtain ice from unaffected sources, such as commercially packaged ice
- Beverage machines -machines with direct feed plumbing to the water system must be disconnected or removed from operation

- Prep sinks -only use bottled or boiled water to wash fruits & vegetables; do not thaw foods under cold, running water
- Three compartment sinks -fill each compartment with bottled or boiled water and change as often as needed; do not use mechanical dishwashers; establishments without a three compartment sink must cease operation
- Hand washing -water for hand washing must be dispensed from a container with a spigot (ex: an orange Igloo drink cooler); use only bottle or boiled water; hand sanitizer can not be substituted for hand washing for food service personnel
- Customer service -use single service eating and drinking utensils instead of reusable dishes & utensils if at all possible
- Cooking -only bottled or boiled water can be used for food prep or pre-prepared foods from approved sources may be used; restrict menu choices if needed
- Sanitizing solutions -sanitizers must be mixed with potable water
- Dipper wells -remove utensils and discontinue use
- Public restrooms -provide hand washing station for each restroom; hand sanitizers can be substituted for the public, but not for employee; portable toilets can be provided
- Grocery stores -mistlers in produce departments must be shut off unless they are on a reverse osmosis system
- after the boil order has been lifted
- run all water lines for one minute to flush the system, this includes are direct feed beverage machines
- clean & sanitize all fixtures, sinks, and equipment connected to water lines
- run empty mechanical dishwashers through three complete cycles to flush the lines and clean the inside
- discard all ice in ice machines; clean & sanitize; run the ice through three cycles and discard ice from each cycle
- replace all filters on ice machines and beverage machines and flush all water lines for 10-15 minutes

The above guidelines may be modified or altered by the Health Department as necessary.

For Homeowners

- Hand washing: use bottled, boiled, or chemically disinfected water to wash hands and brush teeth; it is fine to use the water to wash clothes as long as it is clear and doesn't discolor the clothing
- Bathing & showers: the water is safe to shower or bathe in, but take extra caution to not consume it; for bathing infants, using bottled or boiled & cooled water is recommended
- Pets: animals are generally not affected the same as people by contaminants; bottled or cooled,boiled water may be given to pets if so chosed
- Swimming pools: swimming pools are safe as long as proper levels of treatment are maintained; do not consume swimming pool water

Drinking & cooking water:

- drink bottled water

- use bottled water for infant formula
- shut off automatic ice machines and discard any ice that may be contaminated; make ice from bottled water or purchase ice from a commercial source
- if water from the tap must be used, boil it vigorously for 1 minute; if boiling cannot be done, add 10 drops of household bleach to 1 gallon of water, mix thoroughly and let stand for 30 minutes (only water that is clean in appearance and free from odor should be treated this way); most water filtration units will not remove contaminants
- do not boil water contaminated with lead or nitrates; boiling does not decrease lead/nitrate level, instead levels will increase from boiling; high nitrate levels can cause "Blue Baby syndrome" in infants & toddlers; high lead levels can cause adverse affects to both children and adults
- dishwashers can not be assured to completely kill all organisms that may be in the water; use disposable cups, plates, bowls, and utensils if safe potable water is in short supply

After the boil order has been lifted:

- flush the water lines at each fixture by allowing the hot & cold water to run for 3-5 minutes
- clean faucets and aerators
- purge water using fixtures and ice machines (including ice cubes made with tap water that had not been boiled during the boil order)
- replace or clean filters on faucet filtration systems