



HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER: 3.20

DEPARTMENT: *Administration – H&S Emergency Preparedness*

SUBJECT: Boil & Other Water Advisory

APPROVAL DATE: July 2022

REVISION DATE: Dec. 2023

REVIEW DATE: October 2022; Dec. 2024

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POLICY:

A boil water advisory is a notification that the drinking water supply may be contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms, and that drinking the tap water has a potential to cause illness of residents, team members, and visitors. Under the direction of local public health authority, boiling the tap water destroys the pathogen(s) and makes the water safe to drink and use.

In the event of a boil water advisory, all persons within the Home will use boiled water, bottled water, or water from another safe public supply not affected by the advisory, and will follow procedures as indicated for personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing, and preparing food, including ensuring handwashing is followed by use of alcohol-based hand rub. The location will contact the Public Health Unit that issued the boil water advisory for any questions and additional information as needed.

All persons will be instructed and advised to not use tap water for the following purposes until such time as the boil advisory is lifted:

- Drinking
- Preparing foods
- Making juice/other cold water beverages
- Making ice
- Washing fruits or vegetables
- Brushing teeth
- Giving to pets or animals in pet therapy programs
- Bathing may be permitted under consultation/direction of Public Health – see “Personal Hygiene During a Boil Water Advisory”

PROCEDURE:

The Director of Homes and Seniors Services/Administrator/Designate will:

- 1) Advise the Homes management team and initiate/implement the boil water advisory measures for the duration of the advisory.



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- 2) Ensure all team members, residents, families, and visitors are made aware of a boil water advisory in effect and when the advisory has been declared over.
 - 3) Ensure alternate sources of water are provided to residents, team members, and visitors that is safe for drinking.
 - 4) Initiate a report, as required, to the Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) within the Critical Incident Reporting system -report immediately to MLTC

The Program Manager, Infection Prevention & Control /Designate, in collaboration with the management team, will:

- 1) Post signage at the entrance to the Home, each resident home area, staff break area, kitchen/servery areas and at all faucets, including the kitchen area, washrooms, and hand sinks, as a reminder that a boil water advisory is in effect and that the water is not safe to drink. See sample “Boil Water Advisory Signage”.
- 2) Post signage advising team members, residents, and visitors to apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer (to be available in all washrooms and at all sinks) after normal handwashing procedures with warm tap water and paper towels. See sample Boil Water Advisory Handwashing Signage.

The Director of Environmental Services or designate will:

- 1) Ensure all drinking water fountains, soda dispensers with post-mix service, and ice making machines are disconnected from the affected water supply.

The Management Team will:

- 1) Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer, containing at least 70% alcohol, in all public and team member washrooms and at all standalone hand sinks.
- 2) See attached - Cleaning & Sanitizing Practices During a Boil Water Advisory.

The Manager of Support Services or designate will:

- 1) Discard any ice and beverages that may have been prepared with the affected water supply and sanitize ice cube trays.
- 2) Direct team to prepare boiled water as needed:
 - a. Bring water to a rolling boil for at least one minute.



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- b. Use an electric kettle if possible.
 - c. Only boil as much water as you can safely lift without spilling.
 - d. If boiling water on the stove, place the pot on the back burner.
 - e. Take all precautions as required to avoid burns.
- 3) If providing bottled water, the Manager of Support Services/Designate will check with the Public Health Unit about brands of bottled water or water dispensers considered to be safe/that are produced in locations not affected by the boil water advisory.
 - 4) See attached- Preparing Food During a Boil Water Advisory.

The Nursing Department team will:

- 1) Use boiled water that has been cooled to room temperature, or use sterile water, to wash broken skin and wounds and for other resident care activity (note: commercial bottled water is not sterile).
- 2) Consider using sterile bottled, boiled, or otherwise disinfected drinking water for severely compromised residents.
- 3) Discuss with physician any special precautions that may be needed for residents with weakened immune systems.
- 4) See attached - Personal Hygiene During a Boil Water Advisory.

NOTE: Water filtration devices cannot be relied upon during a boil water advisory to make tap water safe to drink or cook with. Do not use water unless it has been boiled first.

When the Boil Water Advisory has been declared over by applicable authority:

The Environmental Services Team will:

- 1) Flush all water-using fixtures and faucets by running them for a minimum of five minutes/as directed by the appropriate authority (if the service connection is long or complex, consider flushing for a longer period of time).
 - a. In multi-storey buildings, begin on the top floor, flushing each fixture and faucet for five minutes. Once every fixture and faucet has been flushed for five minutes, proceed to the next floor below; continue the procedure until all fixtures and faucets on all floors are flushed.



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- 2) Ensure equipment with water line connections, such as refrigerators and ice dispensers, are drained, flushed, cleaned, and disinfected according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

The Director of Environmental Services/Designate will:

- 1) Flush, drain, clean, and disinfect cisterns that contained the affected water source.
- 2) Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 3) Replace the filters on any water filtration devices, and flush the fixture according to manufacturer's directions.
- 4) Drain and refill hot water heaters that have been set below 45°C/110°F.

The Director of Homes and Seniors Services/Administrator/Designate will:

- 1) Communicate to all team members, residents, and visitors that the Boil Water Advisory has ended.
- 2) Conduct a debrief with the team to review procedures and make any adjustments to site specific practices/Emergency Management Plan as needed.
- 3) Keep a written record of all measures/details implemented/actions taken during the boil water advisory
- 4) Report, as required, to the Ministry of Long-Term Care within the Critical Incident Reporting system

The Infection Prevention & Control Lead or designate will:

- 1) Remove signage.

Post Incident Plan for Recovery

Following a boil water advisory, a debrief will be conducted and will include staff, management, and, as applicable, others (students, volunteers, etc.) involved in the incident. Debriefing is an opportunity to build morale, listen to concerns, document lessons learned, and plan for regular operations. Emotional/physical support for those directly involved/witness to the boil water advisory will be provided as determined by assessed need(s).



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A documented evaluation of the incident, policy and procedure shall be conducted within 30 days of the boil water advisory including what went well, opportunities for improvement, those in attendance, and dates changes implemented.

Testing and Evaluation

Homes are required to test emergency plans including arrangements made with emergency providers. Boil water testing must be conducted a minimum of annually.

Exercises can be developed to test essential elements, interrelated elements, or the entire plan. These can take the form of table-top exercises, drills, functional exercised and field exercises. Testing shall include a written record of testing and changes made to improve the plans including the corrective action, and timeframes.

Emergency plans must be evaluated and updated within 30 days of an emergency being declared over and annually should the plan not be activated.

References:

Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021

ON Reg. 246/22

How to Use Water Safely in Long Term Care Facilities, Supportive Living and Home Living Sites During a Boil Water Advisory: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-water-safely-ltc-bwa.pdf>

How to Use Water Safely in Your Food Establishment During a Boil Water Advisory: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-water-safely-food-establishment-bwa.pdf>

Boil Water Advisory: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/drinking-water-advisories/boil-water-advisory.html>

Guidance for Issuing and Rescinding Boil Water Advisories in Canadian Drinking Water Supplies: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/guidance-issuing-rescinding-boil-water-advisories-canadian-drinking-water-supplies.html>



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Best Practices for Hand Hygiene in All Health Care Settings:

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/B/2014/bp-hand-hygiene.pdf?sc_lang=en

Attachments:

- Personal Hygiene During a Boil Water Advisory
- Cleaning & Sanitizing Practices During a Boil Water Advisory
- Preparing Food During a Boil Water Advisory
- Boil Water Advisory Signage
- Boil Water Advisory Handwashing Signage



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PERSONAL HYGIENE DURING A BOIL WATER ADVISORY

Can tap water be used to wash hands?

Yes, tap water can be used for handwashing, but an alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be applied to hands afterwards.

- Wash hands with warm tap water and soap; lather for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands well under running water and dry them with a paper towel.
- When hands are dry, apply an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol.

Can tap water be used for showering or bathing?

Yes. Residents may take showers or baths with tap water, but must be careful to avoid the face, and avoid swallowing any of the water.

- The use of hand-held showerheads is recommended to assist with this concern.
- Open wounds, cuts, blisters, or recent surgical wounds must be covered with a waterproof covering prior to showering or bathing, and care must be taken not to contaminate these areas during bathing, showering, or towel-bathing.
- Pre-boiled water, sterile water, or water from a safe alternative source may also be used if towel-bathing is required.
- Residents with weakened immune systems may require special consideration; discuss with physician.

Can tap water be used for brushing teeth?

No. During a boil water advisory, tap water is NOT safe for brushing teeth.

- Only pre-boiled water that is cooled, bottled water, or water from another safe source may be used for brushing teeth.

Reference:

Best Practices for Hand Hygiene in All Health Care Settings:

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/B/2014/bp-hand-hygiene.pdf?sc_lang=en



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CLEANING & SANITIZING PRACTICES DURING A BOIL WATER ADVISORY

Can tap water be used for cleaning and disinfecting contact and non-contact surfaces?

Yes. Contact surfaces such as door knobs, handles, railings, vanities, etc. and non-contact surfaces such as walls, floors, and ceilings can be cleaned and disinfected using normal routine practices.

Can tap water be used for washing laundry?

During a boil water advisory, tap water may be used for general laundry procedures.

- Wet laundry must be dried in a mechanical drying machine on a normal setting or hotter.
- Consult with Infection Prevention & Control Lead or designate to verify correct procedures for sterile linen processing.

Can medical equipment that is directly connected to the water supply be used?

Generally, no. Any instruments or machines that use water to sterilize and disinfect equipment would typically be affected by a boil water advisory.

- Consult with Infection Prevention & Control Lead or designate before use of any specialized medical equipment directly connected to the water supply.
- Contact Public Health for specific questions related to water quality.



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PREPARING FOOD DURING A BOIL WATER ADVISORY

Immediate Steps to Take When a Boil Water Advisory is Issued:

- DO NOT use the water for drinking, making juices/other cold water beverages or ice, washing fruits or vegetables, or preparing ready-to eat foods.
- Turn off drinking water fountains.
- Discard ice and beverages that may have been prepared with the affected water supply.
- Discontinue making ice; use ice from a commercial ice supplier made with safe water.
- Disconnect ice cream machines, dipper wells, and any other food preparation equipment connected to the water supply.
- Post signs at all faucets, including kitchen area and washrooms, as a reminder of the boil water advisory and not to drink the water.
- To make the water safe, bring to a rapid rolling boil for at least one minute.
 - Boil only as much water in the pot that one can comfortably lift without spilling.
 - Ensure water is cooled appropriately before using or direct handling to prevent scalds.

What sources of water are approved to be used during a boil water advisory?

- Water that has been boiled for one full minute (water can be boiled the night before, cooled overnight, and stored in a covered disinfected container). Always ensure water is cooled appropriately before use or direct handling to prevent scalds.
- Commercially bottled water (consult with IPAC Lead or designate to confirm brand used has not been affected by the Boil Water Advisory)
- Hauled water from an alternate approved supply not affected by the Boil Water Advisory

Can the cold beverage dispensing machine be used?

No. Beverage machines connected to the cold water supply used to dispense cold drinks (carbonated beverages, iced cappuccino, etc.) must not be used during the boil water advisory.

Can tap water be used in commercial coffee brewers and hot tea towers during a boil water advisory?

Yes. Ensure the coffee maker/hot tea tower produces water at 70°C/160°F. This temperature is sufficient to inactivate disease-causing microorganisms. It is recommended that the coffee pot be held for at least five minutes on the burner prior to consumption.

- Verify temperature using a probe thermometer



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Can tap water be used to prepare food products that use water as an ingredient without cooking?

No. Use boiled, bottled, or an alternate safe water source in the preparation of food products such as powdered drinks, puddings, jellies, sauces, etc.

Can tap water be used to prepare food that will be boiled?

Yes. Tap water can be used to prepare foods that will be boiled as long as the water is brought to a rolling boil for one minute.

Can tap water be used to wash dishes by hand?

Yes. Follow 3-compartment sink dishwashing procedure, and ensure dishes have enough time for complete air drying to take place.

Can the commercial dishwasher be used to clean and disinfect dishes?

Yes. Follow normal dishwashing procedures, and ensure dishes have enough time for complete air drying to take place.

Can glass washer with cold water rinse be used?

No. Glass washers with a cold water rinse must not be used during the boil water advisory.

- Use a hot water sanitizing cycle to wash and sanitize glasses.
- For further information, discuss with Public Health.
- Single-use glasses/cups may also be used.

Can domestic style dishwashers be used in the building?

Yes, domestic style dishwashers may be used, provided the machine has a hot temperature setting or sanitizer cycle.

- If the dishwasher does not have a hot temperature setting, stop the dishwasher at the start of the rinse cycle, add 4 teaspoons (20 mL) of liquid household chlorine bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite, then re-start dishwasher.
- Let dishes dry completely, using a heated cycle dry on the dishwasher.

Can tap water be used for cleaning and disinfecting counter tops, cutting boards, and other kitchen surfaces?

- Wash kitchen surfaces with soap, then rinse and sanitize with bleach solution.



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- To prepare the bleach solution (sanitizer strength of 200mg/L chlorine solution), add one teaspoon of liquid household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite) to one litre of room temperature water that has either been previously boiled, is from a safe bottled water source, or has been hauled from a safe public supply.
 - Spray or pour solution onto food contact surfaces and let sit for a minimum of 2 minutes.
 - Make a new bleach solution every day (bleach breaks down quickly once it is mixed with water).
 - Note: vinegar is not an acceptable disinfectant.

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CAUTION!



**Boil Water Advisory is in effect. This water is not safe for drinking.
Contact a manager or team member for more information.**

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BOIL WATER ADVISORY IS IN EFFECT

Wash your hands.



Apply hand sanitizer AFTER Handwashing.

Contact a manager or team member for more information.