

# Guidelines for Retail Food Service Establishments and Supermarkets During A Boil Water Advisory

**NOTE:** These guidelines have been designed for generic use in a boil water advisory. In general, a boil water advisory means all water to be used for cooking or drinking must be brought to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute prior to use. A safe alternative to using boiled water is to use commercially bottled water.

## Food Service Establishments

Food service establishments may continue to operate during the boil water advisory as long as the measures below are strictly followed.

- Machines used to dispense cold beverages **MUST NOT** be used (i.e. slush machines, carbonated beverage machines, iced cappuccino machines etc.), during the advisory. The lines connected directly to the tap water for mixing must be disconnected then cleaned and sanitized according to manufacturer's instructions once the boil water advisory has been lifted. Canned or bottled beverages must be used exclusively.
- Discard all food and beverages made with untreated or potentially contaminated water. Wash and sanitize all containers containing these products in accordance with the guidelines provided below.
- All water that is to be provided directly to your customers for drinking must be commercially "bottled". Alternatively, all water that is to be provided directly to your customers for drinking purposes must be treated by boiling the tap water for at least one minute, cooling and then storing the water in clean, covered containers until used for serving.
- All water that is used to wash, rinse or soak foods (e.g. fruits and vegetables) must be commercially bottled or boiled for one minute and then cooled.
- All water used as an ingredient in food products that will be "ready to eat" without cooking (e.g. drink mixes, puddings, jellies, dressings, condiments, sauces, etc.) must be commercially bottled or boiled for one minute.
- It is acceptable to continue to prepare food that will be boiled in water, provided the water is brought to a rolling boil for a minimum of one minute.
- Supermarkets/produce markets must turn off and disconnect spray hoses used to spray their fruits and vegetables for the duration of the advisory. Lines should be kept physically separated from fresh produce as they are difficult to clean. Lines should be cleaned, flushed and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions once the boil water advisory has been lifted. All contaminated produce must be removed.
- Coffee brewers and hot tea towers can operate if water temperatures are maintained between 90.5°C – 96.1°C (195°F - 205°F). These high temperatures are capable of destroying micro organisms and should be verified by management daily using a probe thermometer. (Hot cappuccino and hot chocolate machines can be used if temperatures meet or exceed the above temperatures).

# FACT SHEET

- All ice must be made from commercially bottled water or must originate from tap water that has been boiled for at least one minute or must be purchased from a commercial ice supply distributor not affected by the BWA. Ice machines must be emptied and not used for the duration of the boil water advisory. The lines connected directly to the tap water must be disconnected then cleaned and sanitized according to manufacturer's instructions once the boil water advisory has been lifted.
- Commercial dishwashers that use hot water wash at 60°C (or 140°F) with a hot water sanitizing rinse of 82°C (or 180°F) for ten seconds would be considered satisfactory. Where parasitic contamination is suspected, "low" temperature dishwashers using chemical sanitizers may not be effective. Beverage glass washers that utilize a cold water rinse must not be used.
- Dishes may be hand washed by using a three compartment sink (for washing, rinsing and sanitizing respectively), provided that they are rinsed in the second sink in water at a temperature not lower than 43° C (109.5°F) and sanitized in the third sink by immersing them in a hot water sanitizing rinse of 77° C (or 170.6°F) for 45 seconds (to remove either bacterial or parasitic contamination). In the event of BWA's caused by bacterial contamination, and where parasitic contamination is unlikely, sanitizing may be accomplished in the third sink by immersing dishes in a chlorine solution of 100 parts per million available chlorine (15 ml bleach in 4.5 litres of water). This should be verified by using chlorine test strips in accordance with Regulations. Other methods of sanitizing can be used as described in the Ontario Food Premises Regulation. Single-use, disposable dishware and utensils may also be utilized.
- Countertops, chopping boards or large utensils (that cannot be washed in dishwashers or sinks) should be washed with soap and hot water first, then sanitized with a strong bleach solution. Mix approximately 30 ml (6 tsp) of liquid household bleach in to 4.5 L (one gallon) water to make a chlorine solution of approximately 200 parts per million of available chlorine. Verify by using chlorine test strips in accordance with Regulations. Do not reuse or store this solution but make it fresh daily.
- Frequent, thorough handwashing must be emphasized to all staff. Signs advising of the appropriate handwashing technique should be posted at all sinks.
- If the boil water advisory has been issued as a precaution and there is no outbreak of human illness, there is no need for additional hand disinfection with bleach solution or alcohol using the measures described below.
- If the boil water advisory has been issued because of an outbreak of human illness or the presence of a known pathogen (e.g. E. coli or Shigella), hands should be washed with tap water and liquid soap and disinfected with an alcohol-based hand disinfectants, containing more than 60% alcohol.
- Signs advising not to drink the tap water must be posted at all sinks. Drinking fountains should be rendered inoperable i.e. handle removed and covered or signed appropriately.
- Any employee reporting they are suffering from an enteric illness must be excluded from work and can be tested by their family doctor. They are not to return to work until symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours. Frequent, thorough hand washing should be emphasized for all staff.