

Guidelines for Long-Term Care Homes During a Boil Water Advisory

The Medical Officer of Health issues a boil water advisory when the water is unsafe for drinking based on:

- Results of bacteriological testing, or
- An occurrence of illness in the community that has been linked to consumption of the water, or
- Other information indicating that the water is unsafe to drink, or
- As a precaution if there is a loss of pressure in the water system.

This factsheet is a guideline only. Special procedures may be necessary and additional instructions may be provided. Watch for media reports and notifications from the Health Unit. The Boil Water Advisory remains in effect until the Medical Officer of Health lifts it. In Lanark County listen to Lake 88.1 for **emergency** updates, and in Leeds, Grenville listen to CFJR 104.9 or BOB 103.7 for updates.

Where do I start?

Identify a “Person-in-Charge” who will be responsible for ongoing management of the emergency situation and ensure ongoing compliance with safety requirements for your home.

Drinking Water

Immediately:

1. Secure a supply of potable (drinkable) water by:
 - Boiling the water. Water should be brought to a rolling boil and boiled for 1 minute, allowed to cool and stored in a covered sanitized container; or
 - Using commercially bottled water; or
 - Hauling water from another unaffected approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container or arranging for the use of a licensed drinking water hauling truck; or
 - Chlorinating small batches of water. To chlorinate, add 1.25mL (1/4 tsp.) liquid household bleach to 4.5L (1 gallon) of water. Mix and let stand for 30 minutes. Use regular household bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite). Do not use scented bleach, bleach with added cleaners or alternative bleaches.
2. Shut off drinking water fountains.
3. Disconnect all equipment directly plumbed to the water system (ice machines, soft drink machines, coffee machines etc.)
4. Post signs at all faucets, in the kitchen area and in washrooms to advise of the boil water advisory and not to drink the water.

Important: Take special care with residents who have cognitive deficiencies that may impair their understanding of the boil water advisory procedures.

FACT SHEET

Water for Food Preparation and Cooking

Immediately:

- Discard ready-to-eat food that was prepared with potentially unsafe water prior to the issuance of the Boil Water Advisory (coffee, juice, jello, ice etc.) If you are unsure of which foods to discard, consult with a Public Health Inspector.
- Restrict menu to items that require little or no water, and little preparation.
- Use potable water (as described above) for food preparation activities.

Important: All water used to wash and prepare fruits and vegetables, and any water used as an ingredient in a ready-to-eat food product must be from one of the sources described above.

Handwashing

- Heat potable water and place into an insulated container with a spigot that allows clean, warm water to flow over the hands. Provide liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels as always and
- It is recommended to follow-up with an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Post hand washing directions at all sinks.

Personal Hygiene

- Teeth brushing and denture care must be completed with potable water (as described above).
- Unless otherwise specified by the Health Unit, bathing may continue as long as residents do not consume the water and their skin is intact.

Water for Cleaning and Sanitizing

- Use single service utensils where possible; or
- Use potable water (as described above) to clean and sanitize equipment and utensils.

In the kitchen:

- Commercial dishwashers that use hot water 82°C (180°F) or above for the final rinse may continue to be used. Ensure units are functioning adequately. Low temperature dishwashers that use chemical sanitizers may not be effective against water contaminated with parasites.
- If you are unsure of the reason for the Boil Water Advisory, consult with a Public Health Inspector
- Using potable water (as described above), ensure proper manual dishwashing is followed if utensils must be washed by hand. Refer to the “Dishwashing-3 Sink Method” poster for direction.

In the facility:

- Use potable water (as described above), to mix with chemical disinfectants used in environmental cleaning.

In the personal service setting:

- Use potable water (as described above), to mix with chemical disinfectants used in cleaning and disinfecting work surfaces, scissors, combs/brushes, nail clippers etc.



For more information, please call the
Health ACTION Line at **1-800-660-5853**
or visit our website at **www.healthunit.org**

FACT SHEET

Laundry

- Continue with current laundry practices.
- Ensure that laundry staff has access to potable water for handwashing.

Medical Procedures

- Use potable water as described above for any procedures that use the facility water supply.

Public Pool or Spa

Initially:

- Close pools and spas
- Depending on the reason for the issuance of the Boil Water Advisory, operation of pools and spas may not be recommended. Watch for media releases, or consult with a Public Health Inspector to determine if operating the pool or spa during the Boil Water Advisory is appropriate.

If it is determined to be safe to use the pool or spa:

- Ensure adequate disinfection levels are maintained
Pool: minimum 0.5ppm chlorine residual
minimum 2.0ppm bromine residual
Spa: maintain 5-10ppm chlorine or bromine residual
- Operate pool in compliance with Public Pools, RRO 1990, Reg.565 and the spa in compliance with Public Spas 0.Reg 428/05

Enhance Surveillance for Enteric Illness

- Follow standard enteric precautions and outbreak management protocols for residents with diarrheal illness. Notify the Health Unit as soon as possible if residents or staff develop enteric illness. Initiate testing to determine the pathogen involved.
- Staff with enteric illness symptoms must be excluded from work. They must not return until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours. If the boil water advisory is issued as a result of a community outbreak, a 48-hour exclusion, and/or negative stool samples may be necessary before returning to work. For specific outbreak direction, consult with the Health Unit.

For returning to normal operations after the boil water advisory is lifted, refer to the factsheet **“Returning to Normal Operation after a Water Disruption”** for guidance.

Reference: Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit