

# Operation of Food Premises under a Boil Water Notice

This guideline is for food facility operators for use during a Boil Water Notice. This guide can also be used during a Water Quality Advisory, and is recommended, especially when serving more vulnerable members of the public, such as infants, elderly and immunocompromised individuals.

The following methods are **approved sources** of water, that must be used during a Boil Water Notice, to reduce the risk of biological contamination:

- Water from a point-of-use or point-of-entry treatment system (such as one micron absolute filters, chlorination, reverse osmosis, ultraviolet, etc) that has been approved by a Health Officer.
- Water that has been brought to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute or brought to a minimum of 74°C/165°F for 15 seconds or longer and verified by a probe thermometer. Water prepared in this manner should be stored in clean covered containers until use and be prepared daily.
- Water from another approved source, such as a water bottling plant or water hauler that is not affected by the boil water notice. Local plants or vending machines that use the local water are acceptable if the water undergoes further approved treatment to remove the contamination.

## Operation of a Food Service or Food Store During a Boil Water Notice

Food service establishments can continue to operate during a boil water notice under the following conditions:

### a) Point-of-Use and Point-of-Entry Water Filters

If the water treatment unit has been approved by a Health Officer, then operations can continue without any restrictions. The operator should review the manufacturer's specifications to check for certifications and specific mention of protection against bacteria, viruses or protozoans.

### b) Beverage Dispensing Machines

Machines used to dispense cold beverages must not be used (i.e. slush machines, carbonated beverage machines, iced cappuccino machines etc.) unless from an approved source. If the notice has been lifted, clean according to manufacturer's instructions. Coffee brewers, hot tea towers, hot cappuccino and hot chocolate machines can operate if water temperatures are maintained at or above 74°C/165°F for at least 15 seconds and verified by a probe thermometer.

Auto shutoff kettles typically do not allow water to boil for a full minute and therefore should not be used to boil tap water unless their temperatures can be verified by a probe thermometer.



### **c) Drinking Water and Ice for Customers**

Water that is provided to customers must come from an approved source as outlined previously.

Ice must be made with water from an approved source. It may also be purchased from a commercial ice distributor not affected by the Boil Water Notice. If not possible, ice machines must be turned off or unplugged and emptied.

Drinking water fountains available to the public must be made inoperable (i.e. handle removed or covered and signed appropriately).

### **d) Washing, Rinsing, Cleaning and Spraying**

Water that is used to wash, rinse or soak foods (e.g. fruits and vegetables) or to clean food contact surfaces must be from an approved source.

Commercial dishwashers that use hot water wash at 60°C/140°F with a hot water sanitizing rinse of 82°C/180° for ten seconds can continue to be used. For "low temperature" dishwashers the chlorine concentration must be increased to 100 ppm on the final rinse. For manual dishwashing, ensure 200 ppm (approximately 40ml bleach mixed with 10L water) for sanitizing, with at least two minutes contact time.

Other food contact surfaces can continue to be sanitized using appropriate strength sanitizers, 200 ppm for both quaternary ammonia and chlorine. Single service utensils can also be provided to customers, but must be discarded after use.

Any dipper wells for ice cream scoops, or ice cream machines must be disconnected if not supplied with water from an approved source.

Grocery and produce stores with misting machines should not be used unless the water is from an approved source.

### **e) Water Acceptable to Prepare Food**

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 from an approved source.

It is acceptable to continue to prepare food that will be boiled in water (e.g. potatoes, cooked vegetables, etc.), provided the water is brought to a rolling boil for a minimum of one minute. Food that is going to be cooked as apart of its preparation (e.g. baking, grilling, frying, etc.) can be prepared using regular water, as long as a 74° C/165° F temperature for 15 seconds or greater is achieved. However operators should keep in mind concerns about cross contamination, especially if during preparation cooked food will come into contact with foods that will not be cooked.

## **f) Hand Washing**

The water may be used for hand washing as long as proper hand washing technique is being applied. A hand sanitizer (60% ethyl alcohol) can be used after washing hands as an additional step, but does not replace the need for hand washing.

Wet wipes used for cleaning babies or hands are not effective for the purposes of this notice.

## **g) Signage and Verbal Notification**

Signs advising consumers not to drink the tap water must be posted at all sinks during the Boil Water Notice advisory period, unless supplied by an approved source.

## **h) Employee Illness**

Any employee reporting they are suffering from an enteric illness (e.g. symptoms of diarrhea and/or vomiting) must be excluded from work. They are not to return to work until symptoms have subsided for at least 48 hours, or until tested and cleared to return by the Medical Health Officer.

Frequent and thorough hand washing must be emphasized for all staff.

## **Resources**

Waterborne Diseases in BC: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile49a.stm>

Drinking Water and Those with Weakened Immune Systems:  
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile56.stm>

Northern Health's Drinking Water Safety:  
<https://www.northernhealth.ca/services/environmental-health/drinking-water>

Adopted from Interior Health Authority Health Protection's "Guidelines for Food Premises During A Boil Water Notice – Guidance for Environmental Health Officers and Food Premises Operators" (2012).