

# Guidelines During Boil Advisory or Water Interruption

## Food Safety Program of the Medina County Health Department

Water service can be interrupted or contaminated for any number of reasons from construction accidents, to fire department demands, to natural disasters. In general, a Boil Advisory means that all water to be used for cooking, drinking, or cleaning food contact equipment **should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one (1) minute** prior to use and signs are posted on equipment to instruct employees of proper safeguards. The boiled water to be used for drinking or cleaning purposes should be allowed to cool to a safe temperature before use.

If a boil advisory is issued, or you experience a loss of water service, any operation that prepares, cooks, or cleans foods should follow these guidelines to ensure the health and safety of its customers. You will need to carefully assess all parts of your operation that require water. Change your menu, if necessary.

**If you cannot arrange to have potable (safe) water to cook, clean, serve, and wash hands, you should CLOSE until you can put the proper safeguards in place.**

The following list outlines safeguards, as well as some helpful hints:

*Alternatives that are not stated below must be pre-approved by the Medina County Health Department.*

**1. Drinking water**

Use boiled or bottled water. If you use boiled water for drinking, the taste may be improved by transferring the boiled water from container to container to aerate it.

*Water filtering units may not remove all contaminants. Be sure to change the water filters after the Boil Advisory is lifted.*

**2. Beverage machines, beverage dispenser “guns,” coffee/cappuccino machines connected to waterlines**

Shut off water to the machines and post signs. Prepackaged products should be purchased for consumer use.

*Flush and sanitize the lines on beverage machines thoroughly after the Boil Advisory is lifted.*

**3. Ice machines**

Turn off the water and circuit breaker to the ice machine. Discard all ice made after the Boil Advisory was issued. Buy bagged ice from an approved supplier.

*Flush the lines for the ice machine thoroughly after the Boil Advisory is lifted. Sanitize lines and inside of the machine.*

**4. Preparing, cooking or reconstituting food**

Use boiled or bottled water only. Discard all food that may have been prepared during a water interruption or Boil Advisory.

*When in doubt, throw it out!*

**5. Thawing food**

Thaw food only in a refrigerator, microwave, or in the cooking process.

**6. Washing produce/produce sprayers**

Use only boiled or bottled water to wash produce. Disconnect all produce sprayers in retail areas. Bagged, pre-washed, ready-to-eat produce, and/or frozen or canned produce should be used.

*Flush and sanitize the lines of the produce sprayers thoroughly after the Boil Advisory is lifted.*

**7. Handwashing for employees and the public**

Use boiled, bottled, or potable water from an alternative source. A temporary handwash station can be set up by using a large urn or thermos with a spout, full of 100°F water, and a bucket to collect wastewater.

**8. Cleaning and sanitizing tableware, kitchenware, vending machine components, and food contact surfaces**

Use boiled water for all compartments of a three-compartment sink. **Do not** use dish machines. Hot

water or chemical sanitizer may not be adequate if the water is contaminated with bacteria.

***Sanitize all food contact surfaces and equipment after the Boil Advisory is lifted.***

#### **9. Dipper wells**

Turn off water and post signs. Utensils may be stored in food as long as the handle does not touch food. (Do not store scoops in standing water.)

***Sanitize all dipper wells after the Boil Advisory is lifted.***

#### **NOTE:**

An average size business will need to have at least 200 gallons of potable water available per day to operate. There may be circumstances where available alternatives are not sufficient to provide acceptable public health protection. Menu diversity, sales volume, number of employees, and other factors can make it impossible to provide sufficient and suitable alternatives necessary for keeping the operation open. Further, although employees may be expected to take the extra effort necessary for improvising and using less convenient alternatives during a short interruption in the water supply, it is not practical for them to continue safe practices over time if it is not convenient to do so. When safe, sufficient, and practical alternatives are not available, it will be necessary to cease food operations until the Boil Advisory is lifted.

#### **After the Boil Advisory is lifted by the Water Department:**

- Flush the building's water lines for at least two (2) minutes.
- Clean faucet screens.
- Clean the water line strainers on mechanical dishwashing machines and similar equipment.
- Change filters on water filter units.
- Drain all water-using fixtures and appliances of standing water (ice machines, beverage makers, hot water heaters, etc.).
- Clean and sanitize all fixtures, sinks, and equipment connected to the waterlines.

## **Guidelines for Power Outage**

Sudden power outages can be frustrating and troublesome, especially when they are prolonged. Perishable foods must be kept at safe temperatures—either below 41°F or above 135°F. If a power outage lasts less than 2 hours there is probably little cause for concern, but, if it lasts longer, how can you minimize product/food loss? Being prepared and planning ahead can help you save your perishable foods.

#### **WHAT DO I NEED?**

- A digital quick-response thermometer for temperature monitoring.
- An updated list of ice suppliers, dry ice suppliers, and/or refrigeration truck rentals.
- A written plan of action that is accessible to all employees at all times.

#### **WHAT TO DO?**

- If refrigerators and freezers lock; then lock them. If not, place signs on them to **KEEP THEM CLOSED**. A freezer that is half full will hold frozen foods for at least 24 hours and a full freezer will hold frozen foods for 48 hours.
- Transfer hot-holding foods to gas fired hot-holding units, if available.
- Discard any frozen items that have fully thawed.
- Only prepare foods that can be prepared properly and served immediately.

If you have any questions, please call the Medina County Health Department, Food Safety Program, during regular business hours (8:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.) at 330-723-9523; TOLL FREE 888-723-9688; or FAX 330- 723-9650.

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