

What is a boil water advisory? Is it the same as a boil water notice?

A boil water advisory is a public statement advising customers to boil tap water before consuming it. Advisories are issued when an event has occurred that **could** allow contaminants to enter the water distribution system. Such events would include a water main break, small or widespread loss of system pressure or a natural disaster. In some cases, the field staff can make repairs to a water main while under pressure which prevents any contamination from the soil and bacteria from entering the distribution system. When this process is used, there will be no boil water advisory issued. An advisory does not mean the water is contaminated, but rather that it **could** be contaminated. Because the water quality is unknown, customers should assume the water is unsafe to drink and take the appropriate precautions. A boil water **advisory** is different from a boil water **notice**, which is issued when contamination is **confirmed** in the water system. During a **notice**, all customers must boil their water before consuming it or use bottled water.

When we do issue a boil water advisory, we will notify only the customers affected or served by the water main repaired. This notification will be provided by placing door hangers at each customer's residence. If the boil water advisory is widespread, radio, television and other appropriate notification measures will be used to assist the town with informing the public of the advisory. Notices will also be placed on streets and neighborhoods that are affected.

What should I do during a boil water advisory?

- The town advises that when water is restored, consumers should **boil all water** used for human or pet consumption (including drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, making ice and washing hands) or use bottled water.
- Vigorous boiling for one minute should kill any disease-causing organisms that may be present in the water.
- Boiling water concentrates any levels of nitrates that may be present in the water. Infants below the age of six months and pregnant women should use an alternate water supply such as bottled water whenever possible.
- The town strongly urges water consumers to conserve water whenever possible. The advisory remains in effect until further written notification is issued.

Do I still need to boil my water if I have a filter system on my faucet or refrigerator?

Yes. Most point-of-use filters are designed to improve the aesthetics of water (taste and odor), not remove harmful bacteria.

### Is the water safe for washing dishes, laundry and bathing?

The water is safe for washing dishes, but you should use hot, soapy water (you may wish to add one tablespoon of bleach per gallon as a precaution) and rinse dishes with boiled water. There are no restrictions on doing laundry. The water is also safe for bathing during an advisory or notice.

### How long is a boil water advisory in effect?

An advisory or notice will remain in effect until test samples show the water is safe to drink. Testing for bacteria requires 18-24 hours to complete, depending on the type of test used.

### What should I do when the boil water advisory is lifted?

After a Boil water advisory has been lifted and if contamination of the water system did occur, you should flush household pipes, ice makers, water fountains, etc. prior to using for drinking or cooking. Flushing simply means letting the water run to ensure that no contaminated water remains in your pipes.

Follow these guidelines for flushing:

- Run all cold water faucets in your home for one minute.
- To flush automatic ice makers, make three batches of ice and discard.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Run drinking water fountains for one minute.
- Run water coolers with direct water connections for five minutes.

### What should I do if my water is not clear?

You may experience discolored water (red, brown or milky colored) which can be caused by harmless sediment or air bubbles. To clear up the discoloration, the town advises you to run cold water through your bathtub or other faucet for five to 10 minutes. If discoloration persists after this, please contact the town immediately.

### What are total coliform bacteria?

Total coliform bacteria are a collection of microorganisms that live in large numbers in the intestines of humans and animals, as well as in most soils and surface water. A sub-group of these microorganisms is the fecal coliform bacteria, the most common member being E. coli. These bacteria occur naturally in lakes and streams, but indicate that the water is contaminated with human or animal waste and therefore may pose a health risk to people who drink it. The water treatment process removes these bacteria from the water, but events such as a water main break or a loss of pressure in the water distribution system may allow these bacteria to enter water lines through cracks in pipes or back-siphoning from a residential plumbing system. Boiling water vigorously for one minute will kill these bacteria and make water safe to drink.

### Who do I contact for further information?

Call the Hillsborough Water Distribution and Wastewater Collection Division at 919-732-9459.