

Public Guidelines during Water Emergencies (Use of water during boil orders)

Drinking and Cooking Water: During a boil order, consider all water unsafe. Listen for public announcements on the safety of the municipal water supply.

To be safe, drink bottled water, juices, or ice water previously stored in the refrigerator. Make sure to use bottled water in preparing baby formulas.

Shut off automatic ice makers and water dispensers on refrigerators. Throw out any ice that may have become contaminated in ice bin.

If you have to use water from the faucet, boil it vigorously for 3-5 minutes. Do not over boil. If you cannot boil, add five drops of household bleach to each gallon of water. Mix thoroughly and allow standing for 30 minutes. Only water that is clean in appearance and free of odor should be treated this way.

Do not boil water if water is contaminated with lead or nitrates. Boiling does not reduce the lead/nitrate concentration, but increases concentrations. High levels of nitrates can cause “Blue Baby Syndrome” that can be fatal in children under the age of two. High lead concentrations cause adverse health effects in both adults and children.

Do not use contaminated water to make ice, brush your teeth, or wash dishes. When there is a shortage of safe drinking water, use sanitary disposable eating utensils, plates, napkins, and cups.

Hand washing: In order to prevent the spread of waterborne disease, it is important to always wash your hands with plenty of soap, clean, warm, running water before handling, preparing or eating food; handling a baby; smoking; or any other activity that may enter a person’s mouth. Hands should always be washed after using a toilet. Be sure to use bottled, boiled, or chemically disinfected water for washing hands and brushing teeth.

Keep washcloths and dish towels clean. Bacteria can linger or remain on towels and cloths, so wash kitchen linen often in clean water, use disposable towels, or keep wiping cloths in water disinfected with bleach.