

Frequently Asked Questions during a Boil Water Advisory

General Questions

Q: Why did SUEZ issue a Boil Water Advisory?

A: Officials from SUEZ issued a boil water advisory yesterday, April 28, 2020, until further notice to residents throughout the cities of Jersey City and Hoboken as a result of a contractor striking a 36 inch main, a primary water source for these two cities.

Q: What is a Boil Water Advisory?

A: Boil Water Advisory is a recommendation made to residents to only drink tap water if it has been boiled for at least one minute. This recommendation is made by the municipality to protect the health of its people when an unexpected condition has caused a potential for biological contamination of water in a public water system.

Q: When is a Boil Water Advisory recommended?

A: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection recommends Boil Water Advisories when there is a potential risk of contamination in the water supply.

Q: What to do when a boil water notice is issued?

A: Tap water should be boiled vigorously for at least one full minute prior to using it for drinking or cooking (the minute starts when the water begins to bubble). This includes water used for brushing teeth, making ice, washing raw foods, preparation of drinks, and water for pets. Wait for the water to cool before using it, or store it in the refrigerator in a clean container.

Q: What can I drink during a Boil Water Advisory?

A: You can drink tap water if it has been boiled for one minute. Cool and store all boiled water in a covered container. If you do not wish to boil your water, you may choose to buy commercially packaged water for drinking.

Q: How does boiling make my tap water safe?

A: Boiling the water kills microorganisms such as bacteria that can cause disease. Boiling makes the tap water microbiologically safe.

Q: Can I boil water in the microwave?

A: Tap water can be boiled in the microwave in a microwave-safe container, provided that the water reaches a full rolling boil for one minute.

Q: How will I know when the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted and water is safe to drink?

A: SUEZ and your municipality will notify the community when the water is safe to drink without boiling. We will alert local media, institutions (schools, hospitals), restaurants, and community centers via Notify calling, social media, newspaper, and media outlets. You may be asked to run water to flush the pipes in your home before using your tap water or be given other special instructions. Until you are notified, continue to boil all tap water for one minute before use.

Q: What do I do when the Boil Water Advisory is lifted?

A: After a notice has been lifted, 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.
- Run enough water to completely replace one full volume of all lines and tanks for hot water heaters and water coolers.
- Replace other water filters

Specific Questions**Q: I drank the water before I realized there was a Boil Water Advisory. Am I going to get sick?**

A: The Boil Water Advisory has been recommended as a precaution. If you drank the water before hearing of the advisory, your risk of becoming ill is low. Anyone experiencing symptoms of gastroenteritis, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should seek medical attention. Advise your health care practitioner that you have consumed tap water during the Boil Water Advisory. These symptoms are not unique to exposure to potential contaminants/organisms in the water, and a doctor's involvement is key to identifying the cause of your illness.

Q: Do I need to boil water before using it to wash vegetables that will be eaten raw? What about the water used in cooking?

A: Boil all of the tap water you use for washing raw vegetables. All tap water used in cooking must first be boiled for one minute, unless the cooking process involves boiling for one minute or more.

Q: Should I boil tap water for brushing my teeth? For hand washing? Is any special soap necessary?

A: Yes. Any tap water that might be swallowed should be boiled before use. It is not necessary to boil the tap water used for washing hands, and no special soaps are necessary.

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

A: The water is safe for washing dishes, but you should use hot, soapy water (you may add one tablespoon of bleach per gallon as a precaution) and rinse dishes in boiled water. You can use the water for bathing as long as you do not drink it. Supervise babies and children during bathing to ensure that they do not drink the water. There are no restrictions on doing laundry.

Q: I have a dishwasher. Is it safe to use during a Boil Water Advisory?

A: If your dishwasher has a hot/sani-cycle then it can be used, it safely disinfects dishes. If it does not have this setting, after the final cycle, soak dishes for 1 minute in a solution of 30ml (1 oz) of bleach mixed with 13.5 litres (3 gallons) of lukewarm water. Let dishes air dry.

Q: During a Boil Water Advisory, are restaurants/food premises still open?

A: When there is a Boil Water Advisory, restaurants/food premises are given very specific requirements from the Health Department. These orders will ensure that the foods being served to the public remain safe.

Q: How long is boiled water safe to drink?

A: As long as the water is protected from contamination, it should remain safe to drink. Once the water has been boiled, cover it and place it in the refrigerator for future consumption.

Q: Can my pets drink the water?

A: Pets should be provided boiled water, or water from an alternate source until the boil water advisory is lifted.

Q: How do I safely prepare my baby's formula during the Boil Water Advisory?

A: Sterilize all bottles, rings, utensils and nipples in boiling water for two minutes. The water mixed with the formula should boil at a rolling boil for at least two minutes, this will sterilize the water.

Q: Can I use my coffee maker?

A: Most residential coffee makers are not capable of maintaining high temperatures for a long enough period of time to make the water safe to drink. Coffee and tea can be made by using water that has been brought to a rolling boil for a period of one minute or bottled water. If using an automatic shut off kettle, make sure the water has boiled for one minute.

Q: Can I use my activated charcoal filter system (i.e. Brita or other brand names) to treat my water during a BoilWater Advisory?

A: No. These filters are not designed to remove contamination from an unsafe water supply. If you have run the water through your filter during the BoilWater Advisory it could be contaminated. It is recommended that you discard the filter and replace it with a new one once the BoilWater Advisory is over.

Q: Should I be concerned if the water is yellow?

A: No, the color of the water should not affect its safety provided it has been boiled for a period of one minute.

Q: How long will the need to boil water continue?

A: Public notification will be given when the boil water notice is lifted. SUEZ and your local Health Department office can also give you details on how long your boil water notice might last and will advise you when it is safe to return to normal water use

Q: How should I wash my hands during a boil water notice?

A: Vigorous hand washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. If you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled (then cooled) water, bottled water, or water from another acceptable source for hand washing.

Q: Should I use hand sanitizing lotion or wipes?

A: Hand sanitizing wipes alone are not enough, especially to clean your hands for making food. Alcohol based sanitizers work against some common germs (like E. coli, and Salmonella) but may not be effective for cryptosporidium and bacterium spores.