

# What Public Water System Consumers Should Know About Boil Water Orders

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program • 11 SHS Augusta, ME 04330 • 287-2070 • www.medwp.com

## What is a Boil Water Order?

Boil water orders are used to keep people from getting sick from bacteria and other germs in their drinking water. Usually it's due to flooding, broken water lines, power failures, water treatment failures, or pumping difficulties. When a Boil Water Order is issued, people should boil their tap water before using it for drinking and other uses like cooking, brushing teeth, and making coffee. The use of bottled water should be considered for infant formula and people with compromised immune systems. Public Water Systems (Water Districts, Mobile Home Parks, nursing homes, schools, restaurants, motels, etc) on boil water orders must notify their consumers when a Boil Water Order has been issued and take steps to correct the water problem.

## What Should You Do if Your Water Supply is on a Boil Water Order?

### 1) Boil water for one minute at a rolling boil for:

- all drinking water;
- water used to make beverages such as tea, coffee, and juice;
- water from the refrigerator dispenser;
- brushing your teeth;
- your pet's water bowl;
- making ice cubes or preparing food;
- rinsing foods;
- water used for other consumption purposes



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**2) A disinfection "rinse" can be created to rinse dishes.** Add one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach to one gallon of water. Hand and machine washed dishes should be rinsed with this mixture because dishwasher temperatures vary and it is difficult to determine if a sufficient temperature is reached to kill bacteria.

### 3) Handwashing

- Use bottled water or safe water hauled from an approved public water supply; or
- Use tap water and antibacterial hand soap followed by an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with an alcohol level that is between 60 and 85%.

**4) Stay Informed.** Public Water Systems will take steps to correct the water problem and will notify consumers when the Boil Water Order has been lifted. A Boil Water Order will be lifted once water tests show the water is safe to drink. If you are in doubt, or have questions, contact your Public Water Supplier.

## Other Water Orders

### Do Not Drink Order...

• A Do Not Drink Order is used in cases of serious contamination that makes the water unsafe for consumption. The water can be used for other purposes such as bathing and laundry, but not for consumption. Do Not Drink or Consume water in any form until you have been notified that the Do Not Drink Order has been lifted.

### Do Not Use Order...

• A Do Not Use Order is used to protect consumers against severe contamination which may cause personal harm involving any use of the water. You should not use water for any reason other than flushing toilets until the order is lifted and the water system has been flushed.



## Be Prepared

*How do you prepare your family for a drinking water emergency? Simple...*

- Have plenty of bottled water on hand for emergencies.
- Stock up on disposable dishes, silverware, paper towels.
- Purchase hand sanitizer.
- Have an extra container of unscented bleach handy.

## Keep Your Drinking Water Safe:

✓ Protect Your Source

✓ Take Your Samples

✓ Maintain Your Treatment

✓ Inspect Your Pipes & Tanks