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Precautionary Boil Water Notices – Frequently Asked Questions

Source: Florida Department of Health

What if I think I ingested some water that should have been boiled but wasn't?

For a Precautionary Boil Water Notice, it is highly unlikely that anything entered the water system. If it did it would most likely be a type of bacteria that could cause digestive irregularities. If severe diarrhea or cramping occurs or if diarrhea or cramping occurs and lasts more than 3 to 4 days, contact your doctor.

What is the difference between a Precautionary Boil Water Notice and a Mandatory Notice?

Precautionary Notice means that an incident occurred in which there is a slight chance of back-flow or bacteria the entering system, such as, low or no pressure or a water main break or a disruption in the water plant treatment. A Mandatory Notice is issued when a microbiological contaminant is known to exist in the water in an amount that exceeds the allowable maximum contaminant level for drinking water standards.

How long will the need to boil water continue?

A boil water event typically lasts 24 to 48 hours, but it can be longer and may last several days. How long depends on what caused the need to boil, how quickly the problem can be corrected, and how long it takes for laboratory results to confirm your water is again ready to drink. Your water utility can answer questions on how long your boil water notice might last and advise you when you can return to normal water use.

How do I boil my water so that it is safe to drink?

Bring water to a FULL ROLLING BOIL for 1 MINUTE, then allow the water to COOL BEFORE USE. Because water may take 30 minutes to cool, plan. Make up a batch of boiled water in advance so you will not be tempted to use it hot and risk scalds or burns. Boiled water may be used for drinking, cooking, and washing. The flat taste of boiled water can be improved by aeration: pouring it back and forth from one container to another. In lieu of boiling, you may purchase bottled water or get water from another suitable source. Here's an easy way to remember... ROLL for ONE then COOL.

What about ice cubes or home prepared foods that may contain water that should have been boiled?

Discard the ice cubes. If prepared food is not reheated, be on the safe side and don't eat it.

Does using a coffee maker make it unnecessary to boil the water I use to make coffee?

No, you should still use boiled water or bottled water to brew your coffee.

Can I use the water to rinse vegetables or fruits?

No, use boiled or bottled water to rinse fruits and vegetables.

Can I hand-wash dishes with water that hasn't been boiled?

Yes, use hot, soapy water and add one tablespoon of bleach per gallon as a precaution and rinse dishes in cooled water that was boiled first.

What if I use a dishwasher?

Only if your model has a sanitizing cycle. That will bring the temperature high enough to destroy any bacteria that may be present.

Can I take a shower?

Yes. Just be careful not to drink the water while you shower or bathe.

If I have breaks in my skin, is it still okay to shower or bathe in water that hasn't been boiled?

It is recommended that if it is a large open wound or if you are immune-compromised, apply a waterproof bandage to the wound or take a sponge bath.

Do I have to boil the water for my pets?

To be on the safe side, yes.

Can I do laundry?

Yes, it is okay to do laundry.

What if I have a filter system on my faucet or refrigerator?

Most point of use filters are designed to improve the taste and odor of water and not remove harmful bacteria. Check the manual or contact the manufacturer for more information. If in doubt, you should boil your water or use bottled water.

What should restaurants and food establishments such as convenience stores do?

Contact their licensing agency, either the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Business Regulation and follow the Florida's Food Industry Guidelines and use bottled water for food preparation and turn off all ice machines.

If you have any questions, contact
NMB Water Customer Service
at **305-662-9283** 24-hours a day.

