

Guidelines for Food Service Facilities During and After a Boil Water Advisory

In most situations, retail food facilities (restaurant, caterers, supermarkets, food service operations in schools, nursing homes and hospitals, etc.) will find themselves with a Boil Water Advisory (BWA), therefore this document will primarily address BWA situations.

Before a Boil Water Advisory

General

- Develop a plan to notify and educate employees about emergency procedures.
- Develop a plan to minimize the loss of food products and keep food as safe as possible. Consider securing access to a refrigerated truck or warehouse to preserve food during an emergency.
- During a BWA, a food service facility must discontinue making ice. Plan for acquiring ice from a commercial ice supplier or other source if ice will be needed.
- Consider preparing an “emergency menu” that includes a list of recipes that require a minimal amount of water for preparation in case you run into a water supply problem.

During a Boil Water Advisory

When a boil water advisory is issued that affects a food service establishment and the local health department does not indicate that food service establishments must close, the following precautions should be taken by food service facilities until they are notified by the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Public Utilities Department or other authority that the advisory has ended.

General

- Post signs or copies of the ACC Public Utilities Department’s health advisory for employees and customers.
- Develop a plan to notify and educate employees about emergency procedures.

Food Preparation

- Shut off appliances that use tap water, such as ice machines, drinking fountains, produce misters, bottled water refill machines, soft drink fountains connected to the water supply, and water dipper wells.
- Discard ice and mixed beverages made with contaminated water.
- Use packaged ice from approved sources.
- Use bottled water, boiled water, or water that has been disinfected with bleach for drinking, food preparation, washing produce, and cooking.
- Do not use tap water to thaw frozen foods.
- If possible, use disposable plates, cups, and utensils.

Hygiene and Cleaning

- Wash hands with soap and tap water. When you are done washing and drying your hands, use an alcohol based hand-sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and let hands air dry. Provide hand-sanitizer in public restrooms.
- Commercial dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 165°F–180°F, as determined by your local or state health authorities. Do not use a glass washer with a cold water rinse.

Food Service Facilities

- If you are not able to use disposable plates, cups, and utensils and do not have a dishwasher, wash dishes by hand following these instructions:
- Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
 - In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household bleach for each gallon of warm water. The bleach label should say that it contains 8.25% of sodium hypochlorite.
 - Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least 1 minute.
 - Let the dishes air dry completely before using again.

The local health department may add requirements to protect public health during the boil water advisory, such as modifying food preparation, prohibiting menu items or closing operations. Consult with the Clarke County Health Department for specific requirements.

After a Boil Water Advisory

When a food service establishment is notified that the boil water advisory has been lifted and the drinking water supply is safe, the following actions need to be taken.

- Flush pipes throughout the facility by running each faucet with cold water for at least five minutes.
- Flush, clean, and sanitize appliances that use tap water (such as beverage dispensers, spray misters, coffee and tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers) according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Flush hot water tanks.
- Run drinking fountains continuously for at least five minutes to flush the system.
- Replace and sanitize water filter cartridges according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Take proper steps to flush ice machines by following the manufacturer's instructions, including:
 - Throw out any remaining ice.
 - Flush the water line to the machine inlet.
 - Close the valve on the water line behind the machine.
 - Disconnect the water line from the machine inlet.
 - Open the valve and run 5 gallons of water through the valve.
 - Dispose of the water.
 - Close the valve.

For more information, contact:

Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department, 706-613-3481

Get updates at www.accgov.com/publicutilities

Clarke County Health Department, 706-369-5816