

Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities During and After a Boil Water Advisory

In most situations, healthcare facilities (hospital, resident medical facility, etc.) will find themselves with a Boil Water Advisory (BWA), therefore this document will primarily address BWA situations.

During a Boil Water Advisory

General

- Post signs or copies of the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Public Utilities Department's health advisory throughout your facility for employees, patients, and visitors.
- Develop and implement a plan to notify and educate employees about emergency procedures.
- All employees with diarrheal illness should be regulated by standard rules of exclusion from work.
- Flush affected potable water taps until the water meets control limits in accordance with water management plans compliant with [ASHRAE Standard 188](#). Monitoring of residual disinfectant and other relevant water quality parameters (such as HPC in recreational water or pH in utility water) in all building water systems should be performed. Disinfection of water systems may be necessary if control limits are not met. Contact with potable, recreational, or utility water that is not within established control limits should be limited until the systems are restored to normal operating conditions.

Patient care

- Water should **not** be delivered to patients through medical equipment with water line connections to the public water system. Turn off the water supply to such equipment. This restriction does not apply if the water source is isolated from the ACC Public Utilities Department's water system (e.g., a separate water reservoir or other water treatment device cleared for use by the Food and Drug Administration).
- Use only bottled water or boiled water that has cooled to treat skin wounds.
- There is a risk from exposure to contaminated water when showering, bathing, or using soaking tubs. Patients with breaks in the skin should avoid contact with contaminated water.

Water use for food and drink

- Patients, families, staff, and visitors should only drink bottled water, boiled water that has cooled, or water that has been disinfected.
- Discontinue service of food and beverage equipment with water line connections (e.g., post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, auto-fill coffee/tea makers, instant hot water heaters, ice machines, etc.).
- Discard ice made prior to the boil water advisory issuance and discontinue making ice.
- Use commercially-manufactured ice.
- Discard drinks made using water prior to the boil water advisory issuance.
- Prepare drinks using bottled water, boiled water that has cooled, or water that has been disinfected with bleach.
- Discard any foods made with water (e.g., ready-to-eat food) or rinsed with water (e.g., fruits and vegetables) prior to the boil water advisory issuance.
- Prepare/cook food using bottled water, boiled water that has cooled, or water that has been disinfected and/or restrict the menu to items that do not require water.

Healthcare Facilities

Cooking and food preparation equipment/utensils/tableware

- Use disposable plates, cups, and utensils, if possible. If not, sanitize equipment/utensils/tableware using the dishwashing machines that have a dry cycle or a final rinse that exceeds 113°F for 20 minutes or 122°F for 5 minutes or 162°F for 1 minute.
- Discontinue operations when inventories of clean equipment/utensils/tableware are exhausted.
- Review guidance for [Food Service Establishments](#).

After a Boil Water Advisory

- Make sure equipment with water line connections are flushed, cleaned, and sanitized according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Managers of large buildings with water-holding reservoirs should consult with their facility engineer and health department about draining the reservoir.
- Flush pipes and faucets. Run cold water faucets continuously for at least 5 minutes.
- Flush drinking fountains. Run water continuously for at least 5 minutes.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain and refill hot water heaters set below 113°F.
- Change all point-of-entry and point-of-use water filters, including those associated with equipment that uses water.
- Resume usual bathing practices and care for patients with breaks in the skin.

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