

Guidelines for Schools and Childcare Facilities During a Boil Water Advisory

In most situations, schools and childcare facilities will find themselves with a Boil Water Advisory (BWA), therefore this document will primarily address BWA situations.

Before a Boil Water Advisory

General

- Identify a “person in charge” to be responsible for ongoing management of water-related issues and activities during the boil water advisory and to ensure compliance with health and safety protocols for your facility.
- Develop a plan to notify and educate employees about emergency procedures.
- Develop a plan to notify parents and guardians of students regarding the facility’s planned response.

During a Boil Water Advisory

When a boil water advisory is issued that affects a school or childcare facility and the local health department does not indicate that facility must close, the following precautions should be taken until receiving notification from the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Public Utilities Department or other authority that the advisory has ended.

Note: Make sure boiled water has cooled to room temperature before using it.

Immediately secure a supply of drinkable water

- Use bottled water. Bottled water is the best option for drinking if it is available.
- Boil water if bottled water is not available:
 - Fill a pot with tap water.
 - Heat the water until bubbles come quickly from the bottom of the pot to the top.
 - Keep heating the water for one more minute.
 - Turn off the heat source and let the water cool.
 - Pour water into a clean, sanitized container with a cover for storage.

To sanitize containers:

- Wash the storage container with dishwashing soap and water and rinse completely.
- Sanitize the container with a solution made by mixing 1 teaspoon of unscented (bleach that does not have an added scent) household bleach in one quart (32 ounces, 4 cups, or about 1 liter) of water.
- Cover the container and shake it well so that the sanitizing bleach solution touches all inside surfaces of the container.
- Wait at least 30 seconds and then pour the sanitizing solution out of the container.
- Let the empty sanitized container air-dry before use OR rinse the empty container with clean, safe water that is available already.

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Note: When preparing safe water, it is best to use food grade water storage containers, such as those found at surplus or camping supply stores.

If you are not able to use a food grade water storage container, be sure the container you choose:

- Has a top that can be closed tightly
- Is made of durable, unbreakable materials (i.e. not glass)

DO NOT USE containers that previously have been used to hold liquid or solid toxic chemicals (bleach, pesticides, etc.)

- If bottled water is not available and boiling is not an option, disinfect the water to make it safe.

If the tap water is clear:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent). The label should say that it contains 8.25% of sodium hypochlorite.
- Add 6 drops (using a medicine dropper) or 0.5 milliliters of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in a clean, sanitized container with a cover.

If the tap water is cloudy:

- Filter water using clean cloth.
- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent). The label should say that it contains 8.25% of sodium hypochlorite.
- Add 12 drops, 1 milliliter, or 1/8 teaspoon of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in a clean, sanitized container with a cover.
- Shut off drinking water fountains.
- Post signs at drinking fountains, in the kitchen, and bathrooms to advise people not to drink the water.
- Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water for brushing teeth.
- Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water for washing wounds or other medical procedures.
- Discontinue using tap water for indoor and outdoor play and all recreational activities.

Food preparation

- Discard all ice or drinks made with tap water.
- Discard ready-to-eat food that was prepared with potentially unsafe water prior to the issue of the advisory (e.g., coffee, juice, gelatins, and popsicles). Consult with your local public health department if you are unsure of which foods to discard.
- Limit menu to items that require no or little water to prepare.
- Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water for food and beverage preparation activities, washing of fruits and vegetables, and mixing beverages.
- Use disposable plates, cups, and utensils, if possible.
- Review additional guidelines for [Food Service Establishments](#).

Hygiene and Cleaning

Note: Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs. Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

- Use bottled water, boiled water, or water that has been disinfected with bleach to clean washable toys and surfaces.
- Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150°F or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.
- If you do not have disposable plates, cups, and utensils, follow these instructions to wash dishes by hand:
 - Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
 - In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid 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.
 - Wear disposable gloves to change diapers and wash hands with soap and water immediately afterwards. When you are done washing and drying your hands, use an alcohol based hand-sanitizer and let hands air dry.
 - Launder items in a washing machine using a hot water rinse cycle. Dry in a dryer for a minimum of 30 minutes.

Managing gastrointestinal illness (diarrhea or vomiting)

- Follow standard precautions and protocols for staff and children having a gastrointestinal illness that involves diarrhea or vomiting.
- Do not allow staff or children with diarrhea or vomiting to work or come to school until they have been symptom-free (i.e. having no diarrhea or vomiting) for at least 24 hours.
- Staff or children showing signs of gastrointestinal illness (diarrhea or vomiting) should be sent home immediately.

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