Grey Bruce Public Health

Guidelines for Food Premises during a Boil Water Advisory

What is a Boil Water Advisory (BWA)?

BWAs are announcements advising the public to take additional precautions with their tap water for drinking and other uses. They are preventative measures to protect from waterborne infectious diseases that could be or are known to be present in drinking water. **A BWA means all water that is intended to be used for cooking or drinking must be treated, usually by boiling, to ensure any possible microbial contamination is destroyed.** In some cases, there may be additional requirements specified in the BWA; consult with your Public Health Inspector.

During a BWA, all the water you use and provide to your customers must be safe (potable). To protect your customers:

- Immediately discard all ice, food, and beverages that may have been made with unsafe water
- Post signs at all sinks, including washrooms, to inform users not to drink the water
- Disconnect any equipment connected to the water supply (e.g., soft drink dispensers, coffee machines, ice machines, ice cream scoop dipper well, etc.). The lines will need to be cleaned and sanitized according to the manufacturer's instructions once the boil water advisory has been lifted.

Emergency Water Treatment:
Water should be placed in a heat-resistant container or an electric kettle without an automatic shut-off and brought to a rolling boil for 1 minute to kill all disease-causing organisms. A rolling boil is when bubbles break the surface.

If boiling the water is not possible, it can be disinfected using chlorine (bleach):

- Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of unscented liquid household bleach (5-6% sodium hypochlorite) for each U.S. gallon of clear tap water (or 2 drops of bleach for each liter of water).
- Stir the mixture well and let it stand for 30 minutes or longer before you use it, and
- Refrigerate boiled or treated water until it is used.

Safe Food Preparation:
Do not use water directly from the tap for any food preparation. It may be easier to purchase bulk bottled water as **all water used for food and drink preparation must be safe**. It may be easier to purchase ice from a commercial supplier. Ice machines must be emptied and not used during the boil water advisory. Lines to the ice machine must be cleaned and sanitized prior to re-use.

Dishwashing:
Single-service articles (e.g., utensils, plates, cups, etc.) may be preferred during a BWA to reduce the amount of dishwashing.

Mechanical dishwashers:

1. Commercial dishwashers:

- High temperature dishwashers, which use hot water to sanitize (i.e., water at or above 82C/180F for at least 10 seconds) are satisfactory.
- Low temperature dishwashers with chemical sanitizers may be satisfactory, depending on the reason for the BWA. Have appropriate test strips available to be sure the low temperature dishwasher can adequately sanitize dishes.

2. Domestic dishwashers may not adequately disinfect dishes. If you have been approved for use of a domestic dishwasher consult with your Public Health Inspector for use during a BWA.

Manual Dishwashing:

- Dishes can be manually washed using the proper two and three sink methods. Dishes should be sanitized in the final compartment with 20 milliliters of bleach in 10 litres of water (100 ppm) for 1 minute and then air dried.

Hand Washing:

Food Handlers should continue with proper hand washing. Hands must be washed with soap and water then followed with an alcohol based hand rub that contains 60-90% alcohol. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper use.

Employees:

- All employees must be given directions on how to use the water during a BWA
- Any employee with gastrointestinal illness (e.g., vomiting and diarrhea) must be excluded from work until they are symptom free for at least 24 hours

When is a boil water advisory lifted?

Boil water advisories are usually lifted by the health unit or municipal water utility when the water is considered safe and no longer poses a threat to public health.

What should I do when the boil water advisory has been lifted?

The health unit or municipal water utility will provide instructions on flushing water pipes. It is important to carefully follow the instructions provided. Water heaters may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be
disinfected or replaced before being used. Check with the manufacturer for details. Reconnect all machines that were disconnected from the water supply and flush out all machines and fixtures. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure they are flushed and sanitized properly. Remove, clean, and sanitize all aerators, screens, and attachments on faucets. Run all cold-water faucets and drinking fountains for a minimum of one minute before using.

Reference:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water.* Retrieved July 22, 2013 from http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/safe_water/personal.html#make_safe

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Ontario. Ministry of the Attorney General. (1990). *Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 562 Food Premises.* Retrieved July 22, 2013 from http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900562_e.htm