



APPALACHIAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

DISTRICT OFFICE: 126 Poplar Grove Connector, Boone, NC 28607

Telephone 828-264-4995 Fax 828-264-4997

www.apphealth.com



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Contact: Jennifer Greene

Phone: (828) 264-4995

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Email: jen.bryan@apphealth.com

Boil Water Advisory Fact Sheet

Restaurants, Care Centers, and Other Institutions

[NC Environmental Health Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Guidance Manual](#)

Boil water Advisories Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a Boil Water Advisory? Whenever a water system has a significant pressure loss or a confirmed total coliform bacteria test result, as a precaution, customers are advised to boil water to insure its safety until testing can confirm it's safe to use. While there's been no confirmation of contamination, this advisory is a recommended precaution.

What are total coliform bacteria? Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other; potentially-harmful, bacteria may be present. Usually, coliforms are a sign that there could be a problem with the treatment or distribution of a water system (pipes). Whenever coliform bacteria are detected in any sample, we do follow-up testing to see if other bacteria of greater concern, such as fecal coliform or E. coli, are present.

Should I be using ice from my ice machine? It is recommended to use ice from an alternate source such as ice purchased from a vendor that is not in the affected area of the boil water advisory.

Can I still use my dish machine or hand wash my utensils in my three compartment sink?

Recommendations for utensil washing during a boil water advisory are:

- Switch to paper/single service utensils during the advisory period
- Dish machines may be used provided heat or chemical sanitizing is working at all times. Dish machines must be operated in accordance with the data plate.
- Hand washing utensils may be continued provided heat or chemical sanitizing is working at all times.
- A minimum 30 second contact time is required.
- Chemical sanitizing shall be maintained with Chlorine at 50-100ppm, Quaternary Ammonia 200-400ppm. Heat sanitizing:
 - For dish machine operations, cycles shall be in accordance with the data plate with the utensil surface reaching 160°F minimally
 - For hand dishwashing, the third compartment of the set up shall be at least 171°F for a minimum of 30 seconds immersion at all times utensils are being washed.

Is it safe to wash your hands? Hand washing must occur prior to preparing food. During an advisory, wash hands using tap water or at a hand wash station using water that has been boiled.

BUSINESS OFFICE
PO Box 309
Sparta, NC 28675
336-372-8813
336-372-7793 Fax

ALLEGHANY CO. HEALTH DEPT.
157 Health Services Road
Sparta, NC 28675
336-372-5641
336-372-7793 Fax

ASHE CO. HEALTH DEPT.
PO Box 208
Jefferson, NC 28640
336-246-9449
336-246-8163 Fax

WATAUGA CO. HEALTH DEPT.
126 Poplar Grove Connector
Boone, NC 28607
828-264-6635
828-264-4997 Fax

In addition, use a hand sanitizer, and do not handle ready-to-eat food with your bare hands. Use gloves, utensils, or deli paper when handling ready-to-eat foods.

Is it okay to make beverages with the water? Bottled water or water that has been boiled for 1 minute (after water begins to boil) should be used. Self-service beverage or post mix fountain equipment should not be in service.

How should I handle fresh produce? It is recommended to use pre-washed packaged produce, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables that do not require washing. Produce which has been washed prior to the advisory and that will be cooked to a temperature of 145°F is acceptable to prepare and serve. For establishments which have produce misters, misters should not be in service during the advisory.

What should I do after the advisory is lifted? The utility company will be super chlorinating the water supply to ensure safety. Follow the advice or guidance of the water utility. The following steps should be completed once the advisory is lifted.

- Equipment with water line connections such as post mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment must be flushed, cleaned and sanitized in accordance to manufacturer's instructions
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings
- Flush drinking fountains; run continuously for 5 minutes
- For ice machines:
 - flush the water line
 - close the valve on the water line behind the machine disconnect the water line from the machine inlet
 - open the valve
 - run 5 gallons of water through the valve and dispose of the water
 - close valve
 - reconnect water line
 - Open the valve
 - flush the water lines in the machine
 - turn on the machine
 - make ice for 1 hour and dispose of the first batch of ice
 - Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, follow manufacturer's instructions

Health Care Facilities

[Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities](#)

Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC)

When a significant water disruption or an emergency occurs, adhere to any advisory to boil water issued by the municipal water utility.

1. Alert patients, families, staff, and visitors not to consume water from drinking fountains, ice, or drinks made from municipal tap water, while the advisory is in effect, unless the water has been disinfected (e.g., by bringing to a rolling boil for >1 minute) (157).
Category IB, IC (Municipal order)
2. After the advisory is lifted, run faucets and drinking fountains at full flow for >5minutes, or use high-temperature water flushing or chlorination (153,157). Category IC, II (Municipal order; ASHRAE: 12:2000).

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3. [Dental Practice Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control](#)
4. [Healthcare –Emergency Water Supply Planning](#)

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