

## **Emergency Guideline for Food Establishments During Boil Water Order**

### **What food establishments are affected?**

As of 9/8/2022, all food establishments including restaurants, supermarkets, caterers, food service operations in schools, nursing homes and hospitals, charitable food facilities, kitchens in non-profit institutions, food manufacturers and distributors and anyone else involved in the commercial preparation and distribution of food, water and beverages are affected in the following communities.

### **What does a boil water order mean?**

According to the state Department of Environmental Protection's guidelines for [a "boil-water" order](#), "all water used for drinking, preparing food, beverages, ice cubes, washing fruits and vegetables, should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute on a stovetop, in an electric kettle, or in a microwave (in a microwave-safe container).

DEP Guidelines for Boil Water Order:

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/boilfaq.htm>

### **What should restaurant, supermarket and food service managers do?**

A food establishment manager (or the "Person-in-Charge") is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

- 1) *Assess food, water and ice in your facility affected as of noon on 9/8/22*
- 2) *Implement the appropriate emergency procedures outlined below or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the board of health*
- 3) *Immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures*
- 4) *Follow all water department requirements for flushing lines and thoroughly clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces prior to resuming normal operations if closed.*

### **What Should Food Establishments Do To Address the Current MWRA Boil Water Order?**

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during a biological contamination of the water supply (boil water advisory). Where "boiled" water is indicated, the water must remain at a rolling boil for at least one minute. Large volumes of water should be brought to a rolling boil for at least five minutes. Although chemicals (e.g. bleach) are sometimes used for disinfecting small amounts of household drinking

water, chemical disinfection is generally not an option for food establishments because of the lack of onsite equipment for testing chemical residuals.

**What are Alternative Sources of Drinking Water?**

- Use commercially bottled water  
And/Or
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container  
And/Or
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

**What should be done about Beverages Made with Piped in Water – including post mix carbonated beverages, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water dispenser, juice, tea, etc.?**

- Discontinue use of post-mix carbonated beverage machine, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water heaters, etc. using auto-fill.

**What should be done about ice?**

- Discard existing ice made after 12:00PM noon and clean and sanitize ice bins  
And
- Discontinue routine methods of making ice until boil water order is lifted
- Use commercially manufactured ice from an unaffected water supply.

**What about food products requiring water?**

- Discard any ready-to-eat food prepared with water prior to noon on 9/8/22
- Prepare ready-to-eat food using commercially bottled or boiled water.

**What alternatives are there for washing/soaking produce?**

- Do not use tap water for washing/soaking produce.
- Use pre-washed packaged produce
- Use frozen/canned fruits and vegetables  
And/Or
- Wash fresh produce with boiled, commercially bottled water, or safe potable water hauled from another unaffected public water supply system.

**Can tap water be used to thaw frozen foods?**

- Do not use tap water to thaw frozen foods
- Thaw only in the refrigerator, or microwave as part of the cooking process.

**Can tap water be used when cooking food?**

- Use commercially bottled water  
And/Or  
Use water that has been at a rolling boil for at least five minutes

And/Or

- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container

And/Or

- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

**Can tap water be used for handwashing?**

- Do not use tap water for handwashing
- Use heated bottled water, boiled water, or safe water hauled from an approved public water supply

Or

- Do not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food.

And

- Use tap water followed by a food code compliant hand sanitizer.

**Can patrons use tap water in the restrooms during a boil water order?**

- Patrons use tap water for handwashing provide that hand sanitizer is made available at each sink.
- Post a notice advising patrons not to use tap water for drinking or for brushing teeth.

**What about cleaning and sanitizing utensils and tableware?**

- Use disposable, single-service utensils and tableware.

Or

- Use the existing automatic dish machine or the 3-compartment sink. Make certain that the sanitization step is being properly conducted (sanitizer concentration/ temperature).

**Can Spray Misting Units be used?**

Spray misting units used to spray produce, seafood, meat cases, etc cannot be used.

- Discard any foods exposed to misters after noon on 9/8/22
- Discontinue use of misters until boil water is lifted.

## ***Recovery Phase***

### **What should be done when Food Establishments Have Been Informed That the Water Supply is Safe Again?**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation. The Mass DEP and your local water department will provide specific instructions.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the local health department.**

After either the municipality or regulatory authority has provided notice that the water supply is safe to use, the person-in-charge must ensure the following has been completed:

- Flush pipes/faucets: follow the directions of your water utility (in the newspaper, radio, or television) or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least 5 minutes.
- Equipment with waterline connections such as post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Flush drinking fountains: run continuously for 5 minutes.
- Ice Machine Sanitation:
  - Flush the water line to the machine inlet
  - Close the valve on the water line behind the machine and 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 the valve.
  - Reconnect the water line to the machine inlet.
  - 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, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- 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 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.