

Emergency Water Supply Guidelines for Food Establishments



These guidelines are for establishments such as restaurants, food stores, schools, institutions, and convenience stores that provide food service to the public. State regulation requires food establishment owners to ensure their water supply is from an approved public drinking water system ([WAC 246-215-05100](#)). The state Department of Health regulates public water systems ([WAC 246-290](#)).

Procedures Required During a Boil Water Advisory

When a water system issues a boil water advisory, food establishments must close unless the local health agency authorizes them to stay open. If the local health agency does authorize a food establishment to operate during a boil water advisory, it must follow the minimum requirements below until the local health agency lifts the health advisory.

The local health agency may impose additional requirements to protect against health hazards during the boil water advisory. These may include modifying food preparation or prohibiting some menu items.

Minimum Requirements to Operate After Local Health Agency Approval

Shut off:

- Ice machines
- Drinking fountains
- Produce misters
- Bottled water refill machines
- Pop dispensers connected to water supply
- Running water dipper wells
- Coffee pots

Discard:

- Ice made with contaminated water
- Beverages made with contaminated water

Ice: Use packaged ice from an approved source.

Produce: Discontinue produce rinsing and use packaged pre-washed produce from an approved source.

Handwashing:

*When a boil water advisory is a result of *E. coli*/coliform, food workers may not use the water for handwashing. Only use potable water from an alternate source.*

For all other boil water advisories:

- Wash with antibacterial soap and water.
- Recommended: Use hand sanitizer after rinsing and drying hands.

Use boiled or bottled water for:

- Drinking
- Cooking
- Food preparation

Dishwashing Options:

Follow normal procedures or use single-service tableware and utensils.

- Mechanical dishwasher with high temperature or chemical sanitizer (verify correct operation).
- Three-compartment sink:
 1. Wash in hot water with detergent.
 2. Rinse in warm water.
 3. Sanitize in cool-water chemical sanitizer solution:
 - 1 teaspoon bleach per 1 gallon water or
 - Hot water (171°F) for one minute.
 4. Air dry.

Employee Information:

- Post signs or copies of the water system's health advisory.
- Develop a plan to notify and educate employees about emergency procedures.

Follow these procedures until notified by the local health agency or the state Department of Health. When the health advisory is lifted, contact the local health agency to receive approval to resume normal operation. In addition, determine the protocol for turning back on any equipment previously turned off.