



What Public Water System Consumers Should Know About Boil Water Orders

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program • 11 SHS Augusta, ME 04330 • 287-2070 • www.medwp.com

What is a Boil Water Order?

Boil Water Orders (BWO) are used to keep people from getting sick from bacteria and other contaminants that may be present in drinking water. BWO are usually issued when there is flooding, broken water lines, power failures, water treatment failures, or pumping difficulties. When a BWO is issued, people should boil their tap water before drinking or other uses such as cooking, brushing teeth, and making coffee. Bottled water use should be considered for infant formula and those with compromised immune systems. Public water systems (water districts, mobile home parks, nursing homes, schools, restaurants, motels, etc.) on BWO must notify their consumers when a BWO has been issued and take steps to correct the issue.

What You Should Do if Your Water Supply is on a Boil Water Order

1. Boil water for one minute at a rolling boil for:

- Drinking water;
- Water for beverages such as tea, coffee, and juice;
- Water from the refrigerator dispenser;
- Brushing teeth;
- Drinking water for animals;
- Making ice cubes or preparing food;
- Rinsing foods; and
- Water used for any other consumption purposes.



- 2. Use a disinfection rinse for dishes.** Add one teaspoon of unscented chlorine bleach to one gallon of water. Hand and machine washed dishes should be rinsed with this mixture as dishwasher temperatures vary and it is difficult to determine if a temperature sufficient to kill bacteria has been reached.
- 3. Handwashing.** Use water that has been boiled for at least one minute, bottled water, or safe water hauled from an approved public water supply. Tap water and antibacterial soap followed by an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (alcohol level between 60-85%) can also be used to clean hands in a safe and effective manner.
- 4. Stay informed.** Public water systems will take steps to correct the problem and will notify consumers when the BWO has been lifted. A BWO is lifted once water tests show the water is safe to drink. If you are in doubt or have questions, contact your public water supplier.

Other Drinking Water Orders

Do Not Drink Order

A Do Not Drink Order is used in cases of serious contamination that make the water unsafe for consumption. When a Do Not Drink Order is in place, boiling water **will not** remove contamination. The water can be used for other purposes such as bathing and laundry, but not for consumption. Do not drink or consume water from your tap in any form until you have been notified that the Do Not Drink Order has been lifted.

Do Not Use Order

A Do Not Use Order is used to protect consumers against severe chemical contamination that may cause personal harm involving any use of the water. You should not use water for any reason other than flushing toilets until the order is lifted and the water system has been flushed.



Be Prepared

Make sure your family is prepared for a drinking water emergency

- Stock up on bottled water for emergencies.
- Have an extra container of unscented bleach handy.

