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Preparing for and Reacting to a Water Interruption and Boil Advisory

A sufficient supply of safe, clean (potable) water is required to operate a food establishment at all times. Water is used in numerous applications including handwashing, beverage and ice dispensing, food preparation and cooking and cleaning of equipment of utensils.

Whether a food service operation is served by a community or non-community water supply, interruptions in the supply of potable water can occur. Planned interruptions include routine or scheduled maintenance on the pump or plumbing, or, less commonly, the diversion of the water during certain hours each day due to rationing. Unplanned interruptions include water line breaks, fire department demands, supply contamination or system failure due to accidents or natural disasters.

Often times, a facility will be without water for only a short period of time. HOWEVER, for at least 24 hours following restoration, a facility will be under a boil advisory. This boil advisory is put in place in order to protect consumers from potential contamination that may have occurred during the repair or emergency. **This means that your facility must continue to provide a safe, clean supply of water while the boil advisory is in place.**

There are many factors that need to be considered when deciding what action is necessary to protect the public health during an interruption. Factors include facility dependency on water (e.g., menu and nature of operation), the anticipated duration of the water interruption, any advance contingency planning, and the ready availability of alternate supplies of potable water, single service tableware/single use kitchenware and other resources.

There are 4 alternatives a food operation can take during a water interruption and boil advisory:

1. Temporarily cease operation until the boil advisory is lifted.
2. Modify menu to serve only pre-packaged foods with no food preparation required. (ex: packaged pop, candy, nuts, or TCS foods that were prepared and packaged prior to water interruption)
3. Boiling your current supply on site for at least one minute to effectively kill any pathogens present in the water
4. Providing a sufficient supply of potable water from an alternate source*. This can include:
 - ◆ Individual serving size containers of commercially bottled water
 - ◆ Approved piping, tubing or hoses connected to an near by approved source (one that is not affected by the interruption)
 - ◆ Bulk water containers filled from an approved source, a water/food tank truck filled with water from an approved source; or
 - ◆ An approved stationary water tank/cistern filled from an approved source

**To be acceptable, an alternate supply must be protected from contamination and must provide enough water to accommodate the public health related operations of the food service.* In addition, bulk containers, tank trucks or water tanks used for transporting or storing potable water must be cleaned, sanitized and filled in an acceptable manner.

Flushing of toilets and water used for mopping of floors does not require an alternate supply for use.

Below, you can find alternate methods for day-to-day activities that require potable water. Keep in mind these methods **MUST** continue for the duration of the boil advisory and a sufficient supply of water must be maintained for the duration. If you feel your operation cannot maintain these alternate methods for the entire duration, you may have to choose to cease that activity or close.

Food Operation Activity	Alternate Method
Thawing frozen foods	Thaw in refrigerator Thaw as part of the cooking process
Washing produce	Use pre-washed produce (either from a manufacturer or produce that was washed prior to the interruption) Use alternate potable supply or boiled water
Misting produce for retail	ALWAYS – turn of any misting devices directly connected to water supply Use alternate potable supply or boiled water
Preparation and cooking of foods (includes reconstituting of dry foods)	Use only foods prepared prior to water interruption Use prepared food from another licensed facility with potable water Use alternate potable supply or boiled water Discontinue sale of prepared foods
Ice Making	ALWAYS - Turn off ice machine if directly connected to water supply Use ice prepared prior to interruption Use bagged ice from an approved source
Beverage dispensing (includes fountain beverages, coffee machines, iced beverage machines, F'Real machines)	ALWAYS – Turn off any beverage dispensing machines directly connected to water supply Use bottled or canned beverages Use alternate potable supply or boiled water
Handwashing (includes employee hand sinks and public lavatories)	Use alternate potable supply or boiled water. Set up temporary hand wash station using beverage dispensing coolers or jugs supplied with warm water.**
Cleaning and sanitizing of equipment, utensils, kitchen ware, cutting boards, table surfaces, vending machine components, etc...	Use only single-service articles such as paper plates, paper cups and single use silverware Take items to commissary for cleaning Use alternate potable supply or boiled water
Storage of utensils normally stored in dipper wells	Store utensils in food Store utensils in a clean, dry location and switch with clean utensils every 4 hrs Use single use scoops or spoons
Using garbage grinders	Dispose of garbage in proper containers with other refuse

** Example of temporary hand wash station



If you have questions regarding operating during water interruptions or boil advisories, please contact a member of the Food Protection and Public Safety Unit at 740-368-1700