



GUIDELINES FOR FOOD FACILITIES In the Event of Known or Suspected Water Contamination or Water Outages

The California Retail Food Code requires permitted food facilities to have an adequate, running, and safe water supply. Whether your food facility is served by a large or small public water system, it is important to know what to do in the event of known or suspected water contamination or water outage. The following guidelines have been developed by the Amador County Environmental Health Department (Department). They are designed to assist you in protecting your employees and customers from waterborne and foodborne illness during a water emergency.

Known or Suspected Water Contamination

In the event of water supply emergencies, public water systems will issue advisories and warnings to their customers. Such notices may include:

- **Boil Water Advisory.** A water system may issue a Boil Water Advisory when there is an indication of increased contamination risk. Such an advisory is generally issued if there has been a break in a water main or the system has lost pressure. An advisory does not mean bacteria have been found in the water. It is a precautionary statement issued before water testing has been completed.
- **Boil Water Order.** A Boil Water Order is typically issued when a water system determines the water is biologically unsafe. The water system may issue a Boil Water Order because testing has confirmed the presence of total or fecal coliform bacteria. Total coliform bacteria are usually harmless, but do indicate the water has been contaminated. Fecal coliform bacteria can make you sick and are an indication that other harmful bacteria are likely to be in the water. A Boil Water Order may also be issued because the water system is experiencing problems that place the water system at high risk for bacteriological contamination (e.g. prolonged outages, sewage spills near water line breaks, etc.).
- **Do Not Drink the Water or Do Not Use the Water** notifications can be issued for either bacteria or chemical contaminants which indicate the water is so contaminated it should not be consumed and boiling or disinfecting the water may not offer adequate protection.

What to do during a Boil Water Advisory/known total coliform contamination

If your food facility a) has received a Boil Water Advisory, b) suspects the water system is contaminated but is awaiting sampling results, **or** c) has been notified that the water supply is

contaminated with total coliform contamination (but not fecal or E.coli contamination), the facility should operate with following precautions:

- Serve only food heated to at least 165°F as part of the cooking process, pre-packaged foods, and fruit which is normally peeled before eating.
- Consider disposal of all food items that were in contact with the contaminated water (e.g. washed vegetables, pancake batter, ice in ice machine).
- Only bottled water shall be served for drinking. Receipts shall be retained.
- If ice is to be served, it must be commercially packaged and purchased from an approved source.
- Any appliances connected to the water supply (ice machines, soda machines, coffee makers) shall be disconnected from the water supply and posted DO NOT USE.
- Facility must post signs at all sinks that state “DO NOT USE WATER FOR FOOD PREP OR HUMAN CONSUMPTION”.
- Facility may wash, rinse, and sanitize dishes and utensils following the requirements of California Retail Food Code.
- Facility must provide hand sanitizer for use following handwashing or provide bottled water for washing. Receipts shall be retained.
- Post the notification provided by your water system for your customers to see.

These restrictions shall stay in effect until the coliform contamination has been resolved, the water system has been properly disinfected, and the food facility has received approval by this Department.

What to do during a boil water order/ known fecal or E. Coli coliform contamination

If your food facility has received a Boil Water Order, a Do Not Drink Water notice, or a Do Not Use Water notice **or** has been notified that the water supply is contaminated with fecal coliform or E.coli contamination, the facility must take the following precautions:

- Serve only pre-packaged foods and fruit which is normally peeled before eating.
- Facility must dispose of all food items that were in contact with the contaminated water (e.g. washed vegetables, pancake batter, ice in ice machine).
- Only bottled water shall be served for drinking. Receipts shall be retained.
- If ice is to be served, it must be commercially packaged and purchased from an approved source.
- Use only bottled water for making sanitizing solutions for wipe-down cloths.
- Any appliances connected to the water supply (ice machines, soda machines, coffee makers) shall be disconnected from the water supply and posted “DO NOT USE”.

- Facility must post signs at all sinks that state “DO NOT USE WATER FOR FOOD PREP OR HUMAN CONSUMPTION”.
- Facility must discontinue use of all multi-use utensils.
- Facility must provide bottled water for handwashing. Receipts shall be retained.
- Post a notification provided by your water system for your customers to see.

These restrictions shall stay in affect until the contamination has been resolved, the system has been properly disinfected, and the food facility has received approval by this Department.

What to do after an advisory or order has been lifted?

- Flush the building water lines and clean faucet screens (if water is cloudy, run until water runs clear)
- Purge all water lines connected to fixtures and appliances
- Follow the manufacturer’s recommended procedures for a) disinfecting water softeners, b) replacing filters or media in ice machines, water treatment devices, beverage vending machines, and c) replacing carbon filters or carbon media.

Water Outage

If there is no water under pressure available to a food facility, the business should immediately close and must contact this Department for approval prior to re-opening.

Other Tips

- Have a plan for quickly obtaining bottled drinking water in an emergency.
- Have the name and phone numbers for both the facility’s public water system and the Amador County Environmental Health Department (209-223-6439) readily available to you and your employees.

You are responsible for the health and safety of your employees and customers. Please contact Amador County Environmental Health Department at (209) 223-6439 if you have any questions.