



Wisconsin Food Code

Fact Sheet



CONTAMINATED WATER SUPPLY (BOIL WATER NOTICE)

Boil water notices are typically issued when an unexpected condition has caused a biological contamination of a public water system or a private well due to loss of pressure in the distribution system, loss of disinfection, water line breaks, unsecured caps, private well maintenance, power outages, or floods.

Public Health Considerations

When a water supply is contaminated, one of the primary concerns is to protect the health of employees and customers. Always consider if there is an imminent health hazard that would not permit a safe operation. Has there been an evacuation order that would require you to close the facility? Are backup or temporary systems available?

Facility Planning Considerations:

- Prepare an “emergency” menu, including recipes for foods that require little or no water.
- List equipment that uses water and develop a response plan for each piece of equipment.
- Determine the amount of water needed to operate equipment, sinks, and the emergency menu.
- Identify alternate safe water sources in advance.
- Prepare a contact list for alternate water sources, plumbers, contractors, utility companies, etc.
- Maintain an inventory of emergency items such as bottles for hauling/storing water, disposable gloves, hand sanitizer, single-use utensils, etc.

Food Safety Considerations

- No imminent health hazard is present
- Person in Charge (PIC) can ensure that safe operating conditions exist during the disruption



Approved Water Sources during an Emergency

- Boiled Water: Water that has been boiled and maintained at a rolling boil for at least one minute.
- Commercially Bottled Water: including large bottles of water used for water dispensers or individual retail sized bottles of water
- Municipal or approved water source delivered from an approved tanker truck, portable water containers, covered sanitized bulk containers, water buffalo style tank, or any other approved sanitary means of transporting water.
- Water hauled from an approved public water supply in a covered, food-grade container that has been cleaned and sanitized.
- Approved water supply from a neighboring location using approved sanitary hose(s) and fittings.
- Fire system water when approved, as this water is not usually potable





Water as a Food Ingredient

- Use only approved, commercially-produced ice.
- Cease operations for automated, post mix fountain drink dispensers, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water dispensers, juice and team dispensers, etc.
- Discontinue preparing food with potentially contaminated water.
- Discard ready-to-eat (RTE) food that may have been prepared with or may have contacted contaminated water.
- Discard RTE food items stored with ice or displayed on ice that may have been made from contaminated water.
- Use of spray misting units for produce should be turned off during boil water advisory.
- Thawing frozen food under running water is not acceptable during a boil water advisory.



Handwashing

If the facility is unable to provide approved water source for handwashing, then orders to cease food preparation and limit operations to pre-packaged foods only. In order to continue operations, the facility must provide the following:

- Use water from an approved source
- Set up a temporary, gravity flow hand washing system ([Temporary Handwash Station Guidelines](#))
- Approved hand antiseptic substitutions may be allowed where all food is prepackaged
- An operational hand wash sink must also be available in the restroom area
- A hand wash sink with non-potable water must be identified to prevent its use



Dishwashing

- Require the use of single-use utensils
- Use alternative approved water for cleaning equipment, utensils, tableware, and surfaces that may contact food

Facility Recovery Considerations:

- Verify the date and time the water advisory was lifted, or testing deemed the water safe for use.
- Facility must flush pipes, faucets, and drinking fountains, following directions from the municipality, government agency or as a general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least five minutes.
- Assure that cleaning and sanitizing equipment such as dishwashing machines, three-compartment sinks are clean and sanitized
- Follow manufacturer's instructions to flush, clean and sanitize equipment with waterline connections such as post-mix beverage dispensers, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, etc.
- Ice machine must be flushed, cleaned, sanitized, and discard the first three batches of ice.
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces of utensils and equipment.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings
- Change water filter
- Non-public water system (private wells) must comply with NR 809 and NR 812.

Additional Information

[DATCP Food Code Fact Sheets](#)

[Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments | Conference for Food Protection](#)

[AFDO Food Emergency Regulator Pocket Guide](#)



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Division of Food and Recreational Safety
2811 Agriculture Dr., PO Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708
<https://www.datcp.wi.gov>