

## PRECAUTIONARY BOIL WATER NOTICES

Water utilities in Florida are required to issue a precautionary boil water notice whenever water service to an area is shut off for any amount of time. Interruptions in service can occur for different reasons such as a hurricane or other catastrophic events, but are usually caused by repairs made to a water main following a break or during scheduled maintenance, improvements or repair work.

When a precautionary boil water notice is issued, it doesn't necessarily mean that the water quality has been affected. The notice is required because breaks or other events that cause a loss in water pressure, present a remote possibility that contaminants may enter the water system. In response, a precautionary boil water notice is issued as a safeguard to inform the public of the recommended precautionary measures available.

In addition to the issuance of a precautionary boil water notice, additional precautionary measures are initiated by the utility such as flushing the affected water line after it has been repaired and maintaining a proper disinfectant residual in the water to prevent microbiological contamination.

A precautionary boil water notice will stay in effect until two separate rounds of microbiological samples are collected on two consecutive days and submitted to a certified laboratory for analysis and reported to be "clean" after 24 hours. After the samples are reported clean, the precautionary boil water notice will be rescinded. Most notices are rescinded in approximately 48 hours.

During the period in which the notice is in effect, customers are advised to disinfect any tap water used for consumption which may include, but is not limited to, drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, washing fruits and vegetables or homemade ice. Precautions should also be used when bathing. Tap water may be used for showering, baths, shaving or washing as long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water into the eyes, nose or mouth. Children and disabled individuals should have their baths supervised to prevent water from being ingested. Although the risk of illness is minimal, individuals such as infants, the elderly, those who may have recent surgical wounds or a chronic illness or compromised immune systems, may want to use bottled or boiled water for bathing.

Water used for consumption during a precautionary boil water notice can be disinfected by any one of the following methods:

1. Bringing the water to a rolling boil for a period of one (1) minute.
2. Using a disinfecting chemical (during power outages). If you cannot boil water, you should put eight (8) drops of unscented household bleach (4-6 % active ingredients- sodium hypochlorite), which is approximately 1/8<sup>th</sup> teaspoon, into one (1) gallon of tap water, then shake it and let it stand for a minimum of 30 minutes before drinking. Note: cloudy water requires 16 drops of bleach and a 30 minute contact time.
3. Using water purification tablets available from drug, sporting goods or camping supply stores. Commercial bottled water may also be purchased for consumption and food preparation.

Businesses and non-residential locations should take steps such as posting notices, or disabling water fountains and ice machines during a precautionary boil water notice. If you serve or provide water to visitors or employees, use commercial bottled water for drinking or beverage preparation (coffee, tea, etc.). Food service establishments have additional requirements from their regulatory agency.

Regional Utilities, your public water system, takes great care in assuring that your water is safe to drink. We appreciate your cooperation with the precautionary boil water notice to protect public health during the period the notice is in effect. Please call our office at 850-231-5114 if you have any questions or concerns.