



MassDEP DWP Fact Sheet: Tips for Restaurant Establishments during a Boil Order

This fact sheet is based on the Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments guidance, pages 30-35. See the full guidance for more information:

<https://www.foodprotect.org/media/guide/Emergency%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Retail%20food%20Est.pdf>

Planning for Response to a Contaminated Water Supply Incident

- Your food safety emergency plan (required by State and Local health authorities) should include specific details for how you will respond to an official Boil Order. Refer to your plan, and your State and/or Local Health authority and MassDEP Drinking Water requirements for guidance).
- Keep in contact with your State and/or Local Health authority and ask any questions you may have regarding operating during a boil order and when /if you are allowed to continue operating during the incident.

Assessing a Contaminated Water Incident and Business Continuity

- Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained.
 - Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the State and/or Local Health authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the State and/or Local Health authority.
 - The person-in-charge (PIC) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.
- **Remember that a contaminated water incident impacts all uses of potable water including water for consumption, food preparation, dish washing, handwashing and cleaning/sanitizing food contact equipment and surfaces.**

Boiling Water and Drinking Water

- Use commercially bottled water and/or water that has been boiled for at least one minute (a “rolling boil.”)
 - Chemical disinfection is generally not an option for food establishments.
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered, food-grade container that has been cleaned and sanitized.
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

Auto-fill Water Appliances and Equipment

- Automated equipment used to make beverages do not sufficiently heat/boil water to make it safe to drink. **Discontinue the use of auto-fill appliances and equipment.**
- Ice makers should be emptied of existing ice, turned off, and ice made from a safe water source should be used if available.

Preparing Food Products Requiring Water

- Immediately discontinue preparing food with potentially contaminated water and discard any food which was prepared with/came in contact with contaminated water, including those stored with/displayed with ice.
- Food prepared going forward must be prepared using potable water from an approved source such as commercially bottled or boiled water.
- Produce prepared going forward must be either pre-washed and packaged produce, frozen or

canned, or produce which has been washed with water from bottled water, potable water from a safe alternate source, or water that was prepared at a rolling boil for one minute.

- Food should only be thawed in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process.

Handwashing

- If no alternative handwashing procedures can be set up, food preparation must cease, and only pre-packaged food may be served.
- When water has known microbiological contamination, remember to use these special procedures:
 - Use bottled water, boiled water, or safe water from an approved source.
 - Do not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Suspend otherwise approved alternative procedures for bare hand contact.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- During a Boil Order, it is recommended that you use single service utensils and tableware.
- Discontinue operations if cleanliness of the physical facility could jeopardize food safety.
- Non-potable water can be used for mopping floors and cleaning other non-food contact surface cleaning.

Recovery from a Contaminated Water Incident

Consider the following steps for returning to normal operations after safe water service has been restored and after either the municipality or regulatory authority (MassDEP) has lifted the “Boil Order.”

- Document the date and time when the Boil Order is lifted or when water has been tested and deemed safe for use.
- Assure that cleaning and sanitizing equipment such as dishwashing machines, three compartment sinks, buckets, etc. are clean and sanitized.
- Flush pipes and faucets, as well as all equipment with waterline connections, and drinking water fountains. For pipes and faucets, follow the directions from your water municipality or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least five minutes. Equipment must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces, utensils and other equipment before use.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Replace filters in equipment such as water chillers, ice machine, etc. and run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.

Ice Machine Sanitation

- You must follow the manufacturer’s instructions for flushing and cleaning ice machines. If manufacturer instructions are not available, please see pages 34-35 of the [Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments](#).