

# WARREN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS WITH CONTAMINATED WATER

***Contaminated Water Supply (Biological)*** – For the purpose of this Emergency Guidance, an imminent health hazard exists whenever a municipality has issued a Boil Water Advisory or when an onsite water supply has exceeded the maximum contaminant level for coliform bacteria or any other contaminant. **The person-in-charge must:**

- Note the date and time of water contamination
- Assess the operations affected
- Immediately notify the regulatory authority at the onset of the interruption, and
- Implement the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.
- In a widespread event when contact with the regulatory agency is not possible, immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures.

### ASSESSMENT

In the event of an emergency involving a contaminated water supply, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The onset and duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services; and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of the NJ Food Code.

A food establishment manager (or the “Person-in-Charge”) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

### RESPONSE

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during a biological contamination of the water supply (boil water advisory). Where “boiled” water is indicated, the water must remain at a rolling boil for at least five minutes. Although chemicals (e.g. bleach) are sometimes used for disinfecting small amounts of household drinking water, chemical disinfection is generally not an option for food establishments because of the lack of onsite equipment for testing chemical residuals.

#### ***Drinking Water*** Alternative Procedures

- Use commercially bottled water and/or water that has been boiled for at least 5 minutes  
**And/Or**
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container  
**And/Or**
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

**Beverages Made with Water** (including post mix carbonated beverages, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water dispenser, juice, tea, etc.) Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue use of post-mix carbonated beverage machine, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water heaters, etc. using auto-fill.
- Additional information for safe drinking water can be found at the following website: [www.epa.gov/ogwdw/faq/emerg.html](http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/faq/emerg.html).

**Ice Making** Alternative Procedures

- Discard existing ice.  
**And**
- Discontinue making ice.
- Use commercially manufactured ice.

**Preparing Food Products Requiring Water** Alternative Procedures

- Discard any ready-to-eat food prepared with water prior to the discovery of the contamination.
- Prepare ready-to-eat food using commercially bottled or boiled water.

**Washing/Soaking Produce** Alternative Procedures

- Use pre-washed packaged produce.
- Use frozen/canned fruits and vegetables.  
**And/Or**
- Wash fresh produce with boiled, commercially bottled water, or safe potable water hauled from a public water supply system.

**Thawing of Frozen Foods** Alternative Procedures

- Thaw only in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process.

**Cooking** Alternative Procedures

- Use commercially bottled water  
**And/Or**
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container  
**And/Or**
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

**Handwashing** Alternative Procedures

- Use heated bottled water, boiled water, or safe water hauled from an approved public water supply.  
**Or**
- Do not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Suspend otherwise approved alternative procedures for bare hand contact  
**And**
- Use tap water and germicidal hand soap followed by a hand sanitizer.

**Cleaning and Sanitizing Utensils and Tableware** Alternative Procedures

- Use single service utensils and tableware.  
**Or**
- Use the existing automatic dish machine or the 3-compartment sink. Make certain that the sanitization step is being properly conducted (sanitizer concentration/temperature).

**Spray Misting Units** (used to spray produce, seafood, meat cases, etc.) Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue use of misters.

## RECOVERY

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.** After either the municipality or regulatory authority has provided notice that the water supply is safe to use, **the person-in-charge must ensure the following has been completed:**

- Flush pipes/faucets: follow the directions of your water utility (in the newspaper, radio, or television) or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least 5 minutes.
- Equipment with waterline connections such as post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Flush drinking fountains: run continuously for 5 minutes.
- Ice Machine Sanitation:
  - Flush the water line to the machine inlet
  - Close the valve on the water line behind the machine and disconnect the water line from the machine inlet.
  - Open the valve, run 5 gallons of water through the valve and dispose of the water.
  - Close the valve.
  - Reconnect the water line to the machine inlet.
  - Open the valve.
  - Flush the water lines in the machine.
  - Turn on the machine.
  - Make ice for 1 hour and dispose of the first batch of ice.
  - Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, following the manufacturer's instructions.

Food Establishments that utilize water from a Non-Community Water System (privately owned well) must follow the requirements of the New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Regulations as implemented by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.