

## WARREN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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### INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS WITH INTERRUPTION OF WATER SERVICE

For the purpose of defining an imminent health hazard for this guidance, an extended interruption of water service means that the water service has been interrupted for two hours or more. For single events affecting an individual establishment, **the person-in-charge must:**

- Note the date and time of water loss
- 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 an interruption in water service, 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 owner (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 an extended interruption of water service.

**Handwashing** - No water to wash hands in food preparation area may result in contamination of food by employees. Alternative Procedures

- Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. Suspend otherwise approved alternative procedures for bare hand contact provided at N.J.A.C. 8:24-3.3(a)4.
- Chemically treated (wet nap) towelettes (not to be used for bare hand contact) may be used for cleaning hands if the food items offered are pre-packaged AND a hand washing facility is available at the alternate toilet room location.
- **And/Or**
- Potable water from an approved public water supply system which can be placed into a clean, sanitized container with a spigot which can be turned on to allow clean, warm water to flow over one's hands into a sink drain. Provide suitable hand cleaner, disposable towels, and a waste receptacle.
- **And/Or**
- Use of commercially bottled water with germicidal soap followed up by a hand sanitizer.

**Toilet Facilities** – A water interruption will result in inoperable restrooms for patrons and food employees. Alternative Procedure

- Toilet rooms and/or portable toilets with adequate hand washing facilities, which may not be conveniently located but are easily accessible to employees during all hours of operation, may be used until water service is restored.  
**Or**
- Discontinue operation if toilet facilities are not available.

**Drinking Water** Alternative Procedure

- 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

**Cooking – Food Preparation** Alternative Procedure

- Use commercially bottled water, water hauled from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container, or water from a licensed drinking water tanker truck  
**And/Or**
- Restrict the menu to items that don't require water

**Ice** Alternative Procedure

- Use commercially manufactured ice

**Post-mix Fountain Drinks** Alternative Procedure

- Discontinue service

**Cleaning/Sanitizing Equipment, Utensils, Tableware, Physical Facility** Alternative Procedure

- Use single service/use articles  
**And/Or**
- Use commercially bottled water or water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container. Water from a licensed drinking water tanker truck can also be used to clean and sanitize equipment and utensils. If water from an alternate source can be obtained, then follow established procedures to wash, rinse and sanitize. Pre-scrape prior to washing as necessary.  
**And**
- Discontinue operations as inventories of clean equipment, utensils, and/or single-service items are exhausted
- Discontinue operations when cleanliness of the physical facility jeopardizes food safety.

## **RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for reopening 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 water service has been restored and after either the municipality or regulatory authority has lifted any "Boiled Water Advisory", **the person-in-charge must ensure the following has been completed:**

- Flush pipes/faucets: follow the directions from your water municipality such as those via television, radio, newspaper, fax, etc. or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least 5 minutes.

*Instructions for Food Establishments with Interruption of Water Service*

- 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.
- Change out all filters.
- Flush beverage machines.
- 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 using a Non-Community Water Supply (well) must follow the requirements of the New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Regulations as implemented by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.