



# Safe Water Use During a Boil Advisory

A “Boil Advisory” is issued by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality as a preventative measure when there is a possibility of unsafe conditions in a drinking water system. Unsafe drinking water conditions may be due to equipment failure, leaking pipes in the system, or insufficient disinfectant in the water supply. Safe water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. The Oklahoma State Department of Health recommends the following guidelines for water usage during a boil advisory:

- Boiling water, when practical, is the preferred way to kill harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms. Once the water has cooled, pour it into a clean container with a cover for storage.

Note: Water filters do not remove bacteria or viruses. Boil your water even if it is filtered.

- When boiling water is not practical, you can treat water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or unscented household chlorine bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite):
  - If you use chlorine tablets or iodine tablets, follow the directions that come with the tablets.
  - If you use household chlorine bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon (~0.75 mL) of bleach to 1 gallon of water if the water is clear. Mix the solution thoroughly and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking the water.
  - For cloudy water, filter the water using a clean cloth. Then add 1/4 teaspoon (~1.5 mL) of bleach to 1 gallon of water. Mix the solution thoroughly and let it stand for about 30 minutes before drinking the water.

Note: Treating water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or liquid bleach will not kill parasitic organisms.

- If you use bottled water, be sure it came from a safe source. If you do not know that the water came from a safe source, you should boil or treat it before you use it. Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found to be safe.
- Do not use untreated water to brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula. If possible, use baby formula that does not need to have water added. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.
- The affected tap water may be used for washing dishes if a dishwashing machine is used, provided the dishes are then immersed for at least one minute in a sink of water to which one full tablespoon of regular household bleach per gallon of water has been added. If dishes are hand washed, boiled or bottle water should be used.
- Use a bleach solution to rinse water containers before reusing them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution. For example, fire truck storage tanks and previously used cans or bottles may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.
- The affected tap water may be used for bathing and/or showering.
- After the boil order has been lifted or water service resumes, these precautionary measures should be followed:
  - Flush your water lines by running cold water for at least 1 minute.
  - Clean the water-using fixtures and appliances of standing water and ice, such as refrigerator icemakers or coffee makers. Disposal of at least the first two batches is recommended before use.