

Food, Beverage and Lodging Establishments Served by a Drinking Water Supply Testing Positive for E. coli/fecal Coliform Bacteria

This fact sheet should assist you if a “boil order” has been issued as a result of E. coli/fecal coliform bacteria contamination of the public water supply serving your establishment. Complying with the following will help ensure your establishment’s continued safe operation.

Posting Requirements

All sinks, faucets, drinking water fountains, lodging rooms and other locations where the public can obtain drinking water, must be posted to alert the public of the contamination. Food establishments must also provide notice at the entry doors, or at each table. Lodging establishments must also provide notice at the check-in location.

The Minnesota Department of Health, or your local health department, will provide copies of a posting notice that contains the necessary language. Postings must include the following information:

The public water supply serving this facility has been found to contain E. coli/fecal coliform bacteria. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, manual dishwashing and food preparation.

The presence of E. coli bacteria indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, and people with severely compromised immune systems.

The public water supply operator is in the process of disinfecting the system. For your safety, until the contamination problem has been corrected, safe drinking water is provided as follows:

- *Water being served, or used for food preparation [is commercial bottled water] or [has been boiled to kill bacteria]; and/or*
- *bottled water is being provided in your room.*

Safe Water Options

Water used for drinking, food preparation, and diluting cleaning solutions that are used on food contact surfaces must be:

- commercially bottled water;
- from a potable water tank truck with water from an approved public water supply and with at least a free chlorine residual of 0.5 part per million; or
- from building faucets; only if the water is boiled at least one minute, and then allowed to cool, before being used.

Restaurants and Bars

Ice: Use commercial ice made in an establishment that is not affected by this boil order. Discard all ice previously made using water from the public water supply.

Ice bins: Wash with water from an approved source and sanitize in place prior to reuse, with a solution of approximately one-tablespoon bleach per gallon of water for 30 seconds.

Ice machines: Do not use until the water supply has been restored and the machine is flushed, washed and sanitized.

Beverages: Any beverage made with water from the water supply system must be discarded, i.e. juices, ice tea, coffee. Beverage dispenser systems which are directly connected to the water supply such as coffee machines and post-mix beverages cannot be used until safe water is restored and the beverage lines are flushed with safe water. Bottled and canned beverages may be served.

Fruits, vegetables and other foods: Use pre-washed and packaged fruits and vegetables obtained from approved commercial sources. Discard any prepared ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables or foods combined with raw fruits and vegetables that may have been washed with contaminated water.



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Discard any food prepared prior to the “boil order” that may have been previously rinsed with contaminated water or had water added.

Thawing foods: Foods must be thawed in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process. Do not use running water from the affected water supply to thaw foods.

Washing hands and food contact: To reduce the risk of contaminating food products, direct hand contact with ready-to-eat food is prohibited. Food service workers must wash hands in designated hand washing sinks and wear disposable gloves. Change gloves often or whenever they become soiled.

The use of anti-bacterial hand washing gels or foams is recommended for customer toilet rooms.

Washing utensils, pots, pans, dishes: Utensils, pots, pans and dishes may be washed, rinsed and sanitized by:

- manual washing in water from an approved source or that has been boiled for at least one minute; or
- using a commercial hot water or chemical sanitizing dishwashing machine provided operating temperatures and sanitizer concentrations meet manufacturer’s specifications and are verified by the establishment operator; or
- single service utensils, plates, and cups may be used.

Water softeners: Water softeners should be bypassed until the boil order is rescinded.

Lodging Establishments

Check-in: Provide public notice to guests at check-in.

Laundering linens: Tap water may be used for automatic clothes washing machines when used with detergents.

Rooms: Provide sealed commercially bottled water in each room in addition to the required posting.

Bathing: Tap water may be used for taking showers and baths, unless high concentrations of chlorine have been added to disinfect the water system.

Infants and young children should not bathe using contaminated water, since they may ingest water while taking a bath. Guests should be informed of precautions to take.

Pets: Pets should only consume commercial bottled water or water that has been boiled for at least one minute, and then allowed to cool before use.

Swimming pools: A free disinfectant residual must be maintained at all times as specified in the public swimming pool rules. Re-filling of pools should be delayed until after the boil order is lifted.

After the “Boil Order” is Lifted (Food and Lodging Establishments)

The following precautionary measures must be followed:

- Clean and sanitize all fixtures, sinks and equipment connected to the building water supply lines.

Follow the manufacturer’s recommended procedures for:

- disinfecting water softeners, prior to putting back on line;
- disinfecting filters or replacing media in small filters on ice machines, water treatment systems, beverage vending machines; and
- replacing carbon filters or carbon media in filters.

For Further Information Contact the Following MDH District Offices

Bemidji	◆	(218) 308-2100
Duluth	◆	(218) 723-4642
Fergus Falls	◆	(218) 332-5150
Mankato	◆	(507) 344-2700
Marshall	◆	(507) 537-7151
Metro	◆	(651) 201-4500
Rochester	◆	(507) 206-2700
St. Cloud	◆	(320) 223-7300

To request this document in another format, call 651-201-4500 or TTY 651-201-5797.

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