

# Contaminated Water Supply: Boil Water Alert

## How does water get contaminated?

Maintaining water quality and purity is critical to public health, as microbial or chemical contaminants can lead to serious disease or poisoning.

Contamination can occur if chemicals or bacteria leech into the water supply, if the treatment systems are compromised due to electrical outage, or if there is a decrease in pressure in the water mains, especially due to a rupture. (Pictures 1 & 2)

Homes on well systems can also get contaminated if the well cap is not tight, or sewage or chemicals leech into the aquifer. Wells less than 50" deep are particularly susceptible.

## How does climate change impact water supply?

During a drought periods, low water supply may concentrate contaminants in aquifers and wells. During heavy rains, flooding may leech contaminants into water aquifers or well fields. Flooding may also damage well infrastructure or pipes. Overtime, sea level rise will cause saltwater to get into the fresh water aquifers, forcing wells to be moved inland. (picture 3)

### What do residents need to know?

- Anytime water pressure drops, there may be a breach in the pipe; assume you are under a precautionary boil alert and notify authorities.
- Before a hurricane, stock bottled water, or set aside in containers a 3 to 5 day supply. Assume 1 gallon per person per day in a household. Keep in mind that bottled water typically has a 6 month expiration date.
- Sign up for alerts through CodeRed, to receive telephone notifications of emergency conditions automatically. City or county authorities will let you know of a boil water advisory by tagging your door or putting up street notices. If more than 300 homes are impacted, the media will be advised.
- If you suspect contamination, notify both the public utility or the Department of Health.

### Key website

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/dwa-comm-toolbox/tools-templates-main.html>

<https://safewater.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/201454937-Fact-Sheets>



### Health Impacts

Food Poisoning  
Parasite Infection  
Diarrhea  
Vomiting  
Wound Infection

## Boil Water Advisories



- Don't serve, use ice, prepare food, or brush teeth with tap water. Use bottled water for drinking if possible, especially for baby formula.
- Don't wash hands, or expose open wounds to tap water.
- Don't bathe babies in tap water.
- Don't wash dishes, glasses or cutlery with tap water. Use boiled water.
- Do boil water to rolling boil for a minimum of 1 minute. Boil water even if you have filters, filters don't kill bacteria.
- If you can't boil water, it can be disinfect with 8 drops unscented bleach per 1 gallon of water. Allow water to sit for 20 minutes.
- Do flush lines for 5 minutes after boil alert has been lifted.
- Change filters of water & ice systems that may have been contaminated.