

CONSUMER FACT SHEET REGARDING THE MWRA
WATER BREAK/BOIL WATER ORDER
Posted 5/2/2010

What should I know about using tap water in my home?

For household use, tap water that has been boiled for a full minute or more may be used for food preparation, hand washing, brushing teeth, and drinking water. Commercially bottled water may also be used. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) has additional information regarding water use on their website at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/boilordr.htm>

A separate fact sheet for retail food establishments has also been prepared. Due to high volume concerns for restaurants and similar facilities, a 5 minute boiling time is recommended.

I prepared certain foods (e.g., soup, casseroles, salads, prepared juice mixes, etc.) using tap water this afternoon—are these products safe to eat?

No. Any food that was washed or prepared using tap water from affected communities in the MWRA distribution system from 12:00 p.m. on May 1, 2010 should be discarded due to the risk of contamination.

Can I use tap water for making coffee in an automatic coffee maker?

No. Coffee made in automatic drip coffee makers using tap water should not be used – the temperature of the water is not high enough to remove contaminants. Bottled water or water that has been boiled for one minute should be used.

Is it safe to use tap water for making ice?

No. Ice may be made with tap water that has been boiled for 1 minute or more, with commercially bottled water, or you may purchase ice commercially from a provider outside of the communities affected by the boil water order. If you used tap water to make ice after 12:00 pm on May 1, 2010 it should be discarded.

I purchased vegetables and fruit from a grocery store this afternoon that used a mister to keep the food fresh—are these fruits and vegetables still safe?

You should contact the store where you purchased the products and ask if a mister was in use after 12:00 p.m. on May 1, 2010. If a mister was used after that time, the food should be discarded as the water in the mister may have been contaminated. Grocery stores have been advised to turn misters off until the water supply is safe for consumption.

Can I wash fruits and vegetables using tap water?

No, washing produce with water from communities affected by the boil water advisory may contaminate the product. Produce may be washed with water boiled for 1 minute, or washed with bottled water.

How can I safely wash dishware and utensils?

You may use a dishwasher if it has a sanitizing cycle. If it does not have a sanitizing

cycle, or you are not sure if it does, you may hand-wash dishes and utensils by following these steps:

1. Wash the dishes as you normally would.
2. As a final step, immerse the dishes for at least one minute in lukewarm water to which **1 teaspoon of bleach per gallon of water** has been added.
3. Allow the dishes to completely air dry.

How can I safely prepare powdered/concentrate infant formula?

Infant formulas should be prepared using boiled tap water. If boiled water is not available, bottled water should be used.

Can I use tap water for washing my hands?

You should wash your hands with soap and boiled water, or soap with bottled water. If only tap water is available, it is best to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after you wash your hands. If neither is possible and your hands have been exposed to germs, such as after using the bathroom, washing with warm tap water and soap and thoroughly drying your hands is much better than not washing them at all. In these instances, try to keep your hands away from your mouth and use a hand sanitizer as soon as possible after you're done.

When preparing or eating foods, it is particularly important to wash with boiled or bottled water or use hand sanitizer after washing with tap water. Washing with tap water only should be avoided.

The following people should pay special attention to proper hand washing during a "boil water order":

- Food preparers and handlers
- Health care workers
- People who care for infants, young children or the elderly
- People who care for those with conditions that lower their immunity to infections

What should I do when the boil water advisory or order has been lifted?

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the public water supplier will provide specific instructions. Consumers should flush water pipes within the home. When flushing it is important to carefully follow the instructions that will be provided. Water heaters may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected or replaced before being used. Check with the manufacturer for details.