



FACT SHEET

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Health Care Facilities and Boil Water Advisory (BWA)

Refer to the following fact sheets *BWA* and *Guidelines for Food Premises during a Boil Water Advisory* for information on how to treat the water. It may be more practical for bulk water to be purchased instead of treating small batches.

Facility Polices:

Infection Control Practitioners should participate in policy development. **Facility policies should include contingency planning for supplying water for drinking, cleaning, bathing, and toilet flushing.**

Operational	Plans should exist for rapid delivery of an emergency supply of water from commercial suppliers of bottled water. Plan for at least a 24 hour supply. Water used for all consumption (e.g., ice, food preparation, oral hygiene, etc.) should be treated or from a commercial supply. “DO NOT DRINK” signs should be posted at all faucets, fountains, and ice machines. Ensure to follow manufacturer’s instructions for flushing and disinfection when the BWA is lifted. Depending on the circumstance, large quantity supplies may be needed (e.g., tanker truck).
Dialysis	Determine whether facility has a reservoir, such as a water tower (or back up) or water treatment systems to generate water for dialysis. If a separate water storage and treatment system for dialysis exists, ensure it is included in the plan (e.g., filter changes and disinfection). If you stop providing dialysis treatment due to poor water quality, ensure patients have access to their treatments elsewhere.
Hand Hygiene	Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR) that contains 70-90% alcohol should be available. Hands that are visibly soiled must be washed at the hand washing station with soap and water. Hands should then be cleaned with ABHR.
Skin and Wound Care	Surgical incisions reseal within 24 to 48 hours after closure; water available under a BWA, including bottled water would be acceptable. Sterile water should be used for irrigation of wounds or incision.
Bathing and Showering	Products should be available for patient use (e.g., bottled water or no-rinse cleansing cloths). Only potable water can be used for bathing and showering.
Laundry	Normal laundry is permitted. If no water is available, have a contract site available.
Cleaning, disinfection, and Sterilization	No additional precautions are necessary for instruments that have been sterilized; any microbes present in water under a BWA will be inactivated. Routine practices for reprocessing endoscopes with narrow internal channels, such as forced air drying and flushing internal lumens with alcohol, will mitigate any contamination from rinse water even during a BWA.
Environmental Cleaning	Identify products used for environmental cleaning. The facility should determine what water will be used if premixed, ready-to-use disinfectants or impregnated disposable cloths are not available.
Waste	There may be no water at times during a BWA. Toilets may require water for flushing; identify locations where water may be stored and locate buckets that can be used for flushing. Consider bringing in portable toilets to assist with staff needs

	and commode disposal. Determine how residents/patients waste will be handled (e.g., commode, portable toilet, or hygiene bags).
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When is a boil water advisory or order lifted?

Boil water advisories or boil water orders are usually lifted by the responsible authority or water utility when the water is considered safe and no longer poses a threat to public health.

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

Determine the communication process to implement before the use of taps and other equipment can resume. A major component of the contingency planning is identifying the preferred method of decontaminating the hot water system after a disruption.

The responsible authority or water utility will provide instructions on flushing water pipes within the facility. It is important to carefully follow the instructions provided. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected or replaced before being used. Check with the manufacturer for details.

Be prepared to clean up particulates that may be sprayed into sinks, tubs, and showers as water is restored and air pressure is purged from the pipes; consider keeping washroom doors closed in high-risk patient areas until water restoration processes and cleaning of the fixtures is complete.

Reference:

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc. (APIC). (2009). APIC TEXT of Infection Control and Epidemiology. 3rd Edition.

Health Canada. (2008). *Boil Water Advisories and Boil Water Orders*. Retrieved July 22, 2013 from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/boil-ebullition-eng.php>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water*. Retrieved July 22, 2013 from http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/safe_water/personal.html#make_safe