

## Boil Orders and What They Mean

The City of West Branch Water Department issues precautionary boil orders after repairs to the water distribution system (underground water mains) to better protect the community from water borne illnesses. These precautionary boil orders are just that, precautionary. Boil Orders are recommended by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, as well as, the U.S. EPA. Some states have passed legislation mandating cities issue boil orders after water main repairs. The state of Iowa at this time has not.

Boil Orders are put into effect when the safety of the drinking water may have been compromised. Any time we replace sections of pipe, or any time a water main breaks there is a potential for bacteria to enter the pipe. Citizens may notice that only certain areas of the community are affected during a particular boil order. A city wide boil order is not necessary because we can isolate the affected areas and control the direction the water flows through the distribution system. Water that needs to be boiled includes water used for drinking, brushing teeth, food preparation and dish washing. Water for showering, bathing, and laundry is not included in the boil order. These activities are safe. Water should be boiled for a minimum of one minute and then allowed to cool. Do not drink boiling water!

Public Works employees will only distribute notices to the effected buildings/homes within the scope the project. Notices are delivered by walking door to door. We make a conscious effort to find a conspicuous place on the residence or business so affected persons can see it. This can be the main door of a business or home. A notice is posted on West Branch Cable Channel 5 directing people to the City's website, [www.westbranchiowa.org](http://www.westbranchiowa.org) where a list of the buildings under the boil order will posted. If an address does not appear it is not affected. Boil orders are issued by blocks, for example 100 block of a street.

Before a boil order is lifted, two sets of bacterial sampling must be tested. These tests take 24 hours each to complete. In most cases, the issue is resolved within 24 hrs of when water service is restored. However, certain events take longer due to timing. The State Hygienic Lab does our testing. The lab is not open on holidays and is only open until noon on Saturdays. Tests in these cases can be delayed a day or two, requiring up to 96 hours to resolve.

After both sets of bacterial tests are reported to be safe, the Public Works Department will lift the boil order. This information can be found on West Branch Cable Channel 5 and on the City's website: [www.westbranchiowa.org](http://www.westbranchiowa.org). Notices are also hand delivered to each household by Public Works staff in the same manner as the boil orders.

Again, boil orders are issued as a precaution. They do not necessarily mean the water is unsafe. City staff hopes this helps to clear up any potential confusion among consumers.

## Consumer Information on Boil Orders

Boil water orders or advisories are public announcements advising the public that they should boil their tap water for drinking and other human consumption uses like cooking, hand washing, brushing teeth, etc. Boil water orders are preventative measures issued to protect public health

from waterborne infectious agents that could be or are known to be present in drinking water. Boil water orders are issued by the City of West Branch when the City determines that water customers should take precautionary measures with their tap water.

When a boil order or advisory is issued, the City must take appropriate corrective action, continue to monitor its water supply, and notify customers when it has remedied the problem and the boil water order is lifted. For general information on boil water orders consumers may also check the US EPA website and fact sheets on contaminants.

Below are general precautions the City of West Branch recommends you take when a boil water order has been issued.

### General Precautions

- **DISCARD** any ice, juice, formula, stored water and uncooked foods that were prepared with tap water during the period of concern.
- **USE BOILED OR BOTTLED WATER** for drinking, food preparation, mixing baby formula, making ice, washing food, manual utensil and equipment washing, rinsing and sanitizing, brushing teeth or any other activity involving the consumption of water.
- **CHILD CARE CENTERS AND SCHOOLS** should use only bottled or boiled water for mixing infant formula, hand washing, and for mixing sanitizing solutions for diapering areas and surfaces such as tabletops and toys. Adult employees should use a hand sanitizer after washing hands with tap water and soap. Do not use drinking fountains and discontinue the use of water play tables. Follow all guidance provided by the Iowa Department of Education (DOE).
- **RETAIL FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS** must follow the guidance of the local board of health and the Iowa Department of Public Health (DPH). Wholesale food manufacturers must follow the guidance of Iowa DPH. Meat processing plants must follow the guidance of the Iowa DPH and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- **SWIMMING POOLS, HOT TUBS, AND SPAS** that are operated properly, including routine monitoring for adequate disinfection levels, may continue to operate.
- **SHARE THIS INFORMATION** with all other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, visitors).
- **TRANSLATE THE PRECAUTIONS** for anyone who does not understand English.

### Tips for drinking water use during a boil order

There are two simple and effective methods you can use to treat drinking water for microbiological contaminants (bacteria).

1. **Boiling:** Bring the water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute. Laboratory data show this is adequate to make the water safe for drinking.

2. **Disinfecting:** Disinfectant tablets obtained from a wilderness store or pharmacy may be used. In an emergency, liquid chlorine bleach such as Clorox™ or Purex™ can be used at a dose of 8 drops (1/8 teaspoon) of bleach to each gallon of water. (Careful measurement with a clean

dropper or other accurate measuring device is required when using liquid chlorine bleach.) Let stand for at least 30 minutes before use. Read the label to see that the bleach has 5-6% chlorine.

### Washing Dishes

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 a teaspoon of bleach per gallon of water has been added.
3. Allow the dishes to completely air dry.
4. You may also use boiled and cooled water or bottled water.

### Bathing and Showering

Young children should be given sponge baths rather than put in a bathtub where they might ingest the tap water. Adults or children should take care not to swallow water when showering.

### Brushing your Teeth

Use only disinfected or boiled water for brushing your teeth.

### Ice

Ice cubes are not safe unless made with disinfected or boiled water. The freezing process does not kill the bacteria or other microorganisms.

### Washing Fruit and Vegetables

Use only disinfected or boiled water to wash fruits and vegetables that are to be eaten raw.

### Hand Washing

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.

### Cooking

Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute before adding food.

#### Infants

For infants use only prepared canned baby formula that is not condensed and does not require added water. Do not use powdered formulas prepared with contaminated water.

#### Houseplants and Gardens

Water can be used without treatment for watering household plants and garden plants. The exception would be things like strawberries or tomatoes where the water would contact the edible fruit.

#### House Pets

The same precautions taken to protect humans should be applied to pets. Aquatic organisms (e.g. fish) should not be exposed to water containing elevated levels of bacteria. If the organism's water needs to be refreshed use appropriately boiled or bottled water.

#### Flush All Taps When The Boil Water Order Is Lifted

When flushing it is important to carefully follow the instructions provided. Flush your household and building water lines including: interior and exterior faucets, showers, water/ice dispensers, water treatment units, etc. Water heaters may need to be 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.

Residents are advised to "flush" their water following the lifting of a boil order in order to clear plumbing of potentially contaminated water. Flushing your household and building water lines includes interior and exterior faucets; showers; water and ice dispensers; water treatment units, etc. Please use the following guidance:

#### Instructions for Post-Boil-Water Orders

**Cold Water Faucets:** Run tap water until the water feels cold, one minute or more, before drinking tooth-brushing, or using for food preparation. If you have a single-lever faucet, set it to run the cold water first.

**Hot Water Faucets:** To clear hot-water pipes and water heater of untreated water, change all faucets to hot water and flush for a minimum of 15 minutes for a typical household 40-gallon hot-water tank, 30 minutes for an 80-gallon hot water tank or larger. Hot water is then safe to use for washing hands, and for hand-washing of dishes, pots and pans, etc. Never use water from the "hot" faucet for drinking, cooking, or other internal-consumption purposes.

**Dishwashers:** After flushing hot water pipes and water heater, run dishwasher empty one time.

Humidifiers: Discard any water used in humidifiers, Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), oral, medical or health care devices, and rinse the device with clean water.

Food and baby formula: Discard baby formula and other foods prepared with water on the day or days of the boil order. (If unsure of the dates contact your water department.)

Refrigerator water-dispensing machine: Water dispensers from refrigerators should be flushed by at least one quart of water. If unsure of your dispenser's capacity, refer to manufacturer specifications.

Ice cubes: Automatic ice dispensers should be emptied of ice made during the boil order and run through a 24-hour cycle, discarding the ice to assure purging of the icemaker water supply line. For medical, dental, and food-service establishments, please refer to the guidance on the Iowa Department of Public Health website.

Due to the flushing of the lines by residents and the flushing of the hydrants, some customers may experience a lack of water pressure and/or discolored water. However, this is an expected result and does not pose an immediate health risk.

Please direct any questions concerning this boil order to Public Works Director Matt Goodale at (319) 325-8213.