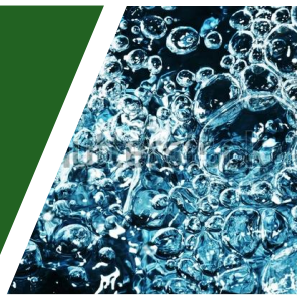
Guideline for Food Processors (Including Abattoirs) During a Boil Water Advisory



Situational Overview

A municipality, community or private water supply serving a food processing facility is issued a boil water advisory when the water supply exceeds the maximum contaminant level of microorganisms (e.g., coliforms or *E.coli*), or the water supply is at risk of microbial contamination (e.g., operational factors such as a water main break).

When a boil water advisory is issued for the municipal water source in your area, you will receive a public notice. If your facility has a semi-public water system (well) licensed under the Drinking Water Safety Act you will be notified of boil water advisories directly by the Office of Drinking Water (ODW), if routine testing of your well detects contamination.

Responsibilities During a Boil Water Advisory

Operators of food processing establishments are responsible for the safety of the water and food products they prepare.

In the event of a health hazard involving a contaminated water supply at a food processing establishment, the following actions MUST be taken:

- **Assess the situation.**
- **Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained.**
- **Contact your Health Officer or email: foodsafety@gov.mb.ca**

- Manitoba Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Branch (FSI) will promptly respond to an operator's inquiries and provide guidance during a boil water advisory. FSI may also receive notice of a boil water advisory for a food processing establishment from ODW. In this case, FSI will contact operators to discuss risk and actions to be taken.
- ODW will work with semi-public water systems that have been issued a boil water advisory to complete corrective actions, conduct additional testing and rescind the boil water advisory when results indicate the water is safe.

A food processing establishment that is ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization is granted by the applicable regulatory authority.

Manitoba

Response to a Boil Water Advisory

Use boiled water. **Water must be brought to and kept at a rolling boil for at least one minute.**

- Most water treatment devices installed on building water supply systems are not designed to treat water for the kind of acute health-related contaminants addressed by a boil water advisory.
- Chemical disinfection is generally not an option for food processing establishments because of the lack of on-site equipment for testing chemical residues.

Alternatively, use commercially bottled water, or another source of potable water.

Temporary Alternative Procedures

The following are temporary alternative procedures to address specific food processes involving water usage, during a biological contamination of the water supply (boil water advisory).

Hand washing: Use boiled water, bottled water or other source of potable water, or use tap water followed by a hand sanitizer.

Food ingredient: Use commercially bottled water, boiled water, or other source of potable water. Discuss product risk with your health officer to determine if any ready-to-eat food prepared with water prior to the discovery of the contamination should be discarded.

Abattoir use:

- Use commercially bottled water, boiled water, or other source of potable water for:
    - rinsing carcasses and salvaged organs
    - food animal drinking water
- Alternatively, organic acid can be used to rinse carcasses and salvaged organs (e.g., lactic acid or peroxyacetic acid). The use of organic acid will replace the water wash of the carcass and will reduce or kill micro-organisms present on the carcass surface.
    - Purchase food grade organic acids.
    - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for recommended concentration, preparation and handling. For example, apply the following solutions without rinsing:
        - 5% lactic acid (up to maximum 10%)
        - 1000 ppm peroxyacetic acid (up to maximum 2000 ppm)
    - If preparing or diluting organic acid solutions, use bottled or boiled water.
    - Cover all parts of the carcass surface working from the top downward and rinse salvaged organs with the organic acid.
    - During dressing clean hands and tools frequently using boiled water or potable water to minimize cross contamination of carcasses.

- Tap water is acceptable for:
    - misting live animals prior to stunning
    - electrical water baths (for stunning)
    - scald tanks

Direct food contact, non ready-to-eat: Use commercially bottled water, boiled water or other source of potable water or consult with your health officer or email: foodsafety@gov.mb.ca to discuss further if water can be used.

Direct food contact, ready-to-eat (e.g., washing produce, showering ready to eat meat): use commercially bottled water, boiled water or other source of potable water.

Thawing food: Do not use tap water to thaw frozen food. Thaw frozen food in a refrigerator, in a microwave or as part of the cooking process.

Cooling food: Ensure ice wands used to cool food are filled with commercially bottled water, boiled water, or other source of potable water, or use an alternative safe cooling method such as dividing into smaller portion sizes and refrigerating.

Ice making: Discard existing ice and discontinue making ice. Use an alternate source of ice prepared from potable water such as commercially prepared.

Commercial water bottlers and ice manufacturers:
Contact your health officer or email: foodsafety@gov.mb.ca

- It may be possible to continue operation where effective water treatment (such as ozonation, UV light, reverse osmosis) is in place and the facility demonstrates appropriate maintenance of their system. When continued operation is approved, testing may be required.

Cleaning and Sanitation of Food Processing Equipment:

- Follow a three-compartment sink method (wash, rinse, sanitize).
- Use an existing mechanical dishwasher under the following conditions:
    - The dishwasher is operating in accordance with the specifications on the machine's data plate, which states the cycle times and temperatures that must be used.
    - The dishwasher can sanitize with either hot water (82°C) or with a chemical solution approved under Manitoba's Food and Food Handling Establishments Regulation.
- Follow established clean-in-place (CIP) procedures.

Food Contact Surfaces:
All food contact surfaces and food preparation areas are to be properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized.

- Wash: water and detergent
- Rinse: water

- Sanitize: acceptable sanitizer at appropriate concentration e.g., 100ppm chlorine solution for 1 minute.
    - To create a 100 ppm chlorine solution, mix ½ teaspoon (2.5 mL) bleach into 1 litre of potable water.)
    - Confirm concentration using appropriate test strips.
    - Monitor the sanitizer concentration and change the solution as required, or if it becomes soiled.

When a Boil Water Advisory is Lifted

When your water supply is safe again, the boil water advisory will be lifted and you will get notice you can use the tap water. Perform the following steps before using the tap water as usual:

Water pipes / Faucets

- ☐ Flush out the building's water pipes as per the municipality or Office of Drinking Water directions.
- ☐ Turn on all cold water taps, faucets and any outside hose spigots and let them run for five minutes.
- ☐ Flush hoses for five minutes.
- ☐ Remove and clean all faucet screens and aerators on taps.
- ☐ Replace any water filter cartridges.
- ☐ Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.

Equipment with water line connections

Flush all water using fixtures/equipment by running water through them for five minutes and follow manufacturer's directions, where applicable. If a service connection is long or complicated, consider flushing for a longer period of time.

- ☐ Ice makers: flush, then clean and sanitize as per the manufacturers' instructions prior to resuming making ice.

For more information email the Food Safety and Inspection Branch.