

Precautionary Boil Water Notice- What Should You Do?

If during a hurricane, tropical storm or unforeseen emergency, our water system loses power and water pressure, we will issue a precautionary boil water notice (PBWN) to our customers.

Water pressure keeps pollutants from entering the underground pipes that bring drinking water to your house or business. When the pressure is lost, contaminants can seep into the pipes. This might allow pathogens (disease-causing germs) into the water that can cause illness if one drinks it or prepares food or beverages with it. So, as a precaution, it is important to disinfect tap water to kill any bacteria or viruses that may have entered the water, or use an alternative source of water (bottled water).

Under a boil water notice, water used for consumption can be disinfected by any one of the following methods:

- Bringing the water to a rolling boil and holding it there for one (1) minute, OR
- Using a disinfecting chemical. If you cannot boil water, you should put eight (8) drops of common household bleach (unscented) which is about 1/8th teaspoon, into one (1) gallon of tap water, then shake it, and allow it to stand for 30 minutes before drinking. If the water is cloudy, use sixteen (16) drops, about 1/4 teaspoon of bleach instead of 8, shake it, and let it stand for 30 minutes. There should be a slight chlorine odor. Use common household bleach that has 5% to 8% active ingredients. Use food grade containers. OR
- Using water purification tablets or iodine that many sports and camping stores sell, and follow their directions.

You can also buy commercial bottled water for consumption and food preparation as an alternative.

Consumption includes brushing teeth, washing fruits and vegetables, and homemade ice. Tap water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, so long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water in eyes or nose or mouth. Children and disabled individuals should have their bath supervised to ensure water is not ingested. The time spent bathing should be minimized. Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who have recent surgical wounds, are immunosuppressed, or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water (that has cooled) for cleansing until the notice is lifted.

Businesses and non-residential sites should take steps such as posting notices at, or disabling water fountains and ice machines during the PBWN. If you provide water to visitors or employees, use commercially produced bottled water for drinking or beverage preparation (coffee). Food service operations have additional requirements from their regulatory agency.

After the water system is repaired, and the pressure is restored in the pipes to your home or business, the precautionary boil water notice will remain in effect for one to several days while bacteria tests are conducted to assure the safety of the water. The notice will be lifted (rescinded) only after tests prove the water is safe to drink. It may be lifted in sections of the city/county as those areas' pipes are cleared and the water deemed safe to drink. The media will be provided information updates and you should listen for this important information on the radio, television, or other media sources. Flush your taps and dispose of ice made during the PBWN.

The employees of the City of LaBelle, and *Woodard & Curran*, your public water system, take great care in assuring that your water is safe to drink, and we appreciate your cooperation with the precautionary boil water notice to protect public health during this difficult time. Please call us at the phone number above if you have questions or concerns. The County Health Department can also assist you with answers to questions.