



JOHNSTON COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Food and Water Safety During and After Disasters

Food Safety:

- Make sure all refrigerators and freezers have accurate air temperature thermometers.
- It is a good idea to freeze containers of water and have ready to place in the refrigerator or cooler in the event of a power outage. This will help keep food colder longer.
- If there is a loss of power, minimize the number of times you open the doors to the freezer and the refrigerator.
- Most refrigerators will keep foods cold for approximately 4 hours past the time the power went out. Check the foods at 4 hours, if they are above 41F then they should be discarded.
- Food in the freezer can usually last for 48 hours. After 48 hours, check the temperature of the food, partially thawed food is safe to thoroughly cook or refreeze. Any food that has thawed completely should not be refrozen.
- Do not consume any food or beverage that may have come into contact with flood water. Any food (including items in cans, plastic containers or glass containers) that have come into contact with floodwater should be discarded.
- When assessing your food keep in mind: When in doubt, throw it out!

Drinking Water:

- Purchase enough bottled water to provide each person in the home 1 gallon per day
- Tap water can also be stored ahead of time in household containers (Tupperware, pitchers, etc.)
- Flooding can introduce impurities into private drinking water wells. If your well has been submerged, discontinue use for drinking and cooking until it can be tested.
- If you know or suspect that your well has been contaminated, contact the Johnston County Health Department at (919) 989-5180.
- Public drinking water sources can also be affected during a storm. For Boil Water Advisories and Notices, reference the attached recommendations

Septic Tanks:

- Human exposure to waste or water contaminated with human waste can lead to disease transmission. Do not let children play in flooded water as this water may be affected by sewage too.
- If your septic tank has been flooded, do not use the plumbing system while the tank is still under water.
- Discontinue use of the plumbing system if wastewater is backing up from any of the drains or into the sinks.
- When cleaning up, be careful not to drive across the septic tank or drain lines with heavy equipment as this can damage them.

Cleaning Up:

- Any item that has been in contact with flooded water will need to be disinfected or discarded.
- Always wear proper PPE (personal protective equipment) while cleaning up. Wear waterproof gloves and boots, long sleeves and pants, eye protection and a disposable face mask if available.
- Hard surface floors, counters and furniture can be disinfected using a bleach solution. All areas should be cleaned with a soapy water solution first. Mix the disinfecting solution using 1/4 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water.
- Items such as cloths, stuffed animals, bed linens and pillows can be laundered normally. If items are visibly moldy and unable to clean then they should be discarded.

Additional Information and Guidance can be found at the following link

<https://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/emprepresp.htm>

Or by contacting the Johnston County Environmental Health Office at (919)989-5180 or

envhealth@johnstonnc.com

RECOMMENDED WATER USE RESTRICTIONS DURING BOIL WATER ADVISORY OR BOIL WATER NOTICE

When public water systems have problems, which could cause the water supply to be contaminated with bacteria, water users may be advised or notified that the water should not be used for drinking unless it is first boiled or disinfected with chlorine. The notification can be made either by the water system operator or the NCDENR Division of Environmental Health, Public Water Supply Section. Users may also be notified not to use water which may have chemical contamination making it unfit for drinking. During such notifications, the Division of Environmental Health, Environmental Health Services Section recommends using these guidelines for restricting water use.

TYPES OF NOTIFICATIONS:

Boil Water Advisory means there has been a problem which may have increased risk for the water system to be contaminated. Advisories are generally issued if there has been a break in a water main or the system has lost pressure. An advisory does not mean bacteria has been found in the water. It is a precautionary statement issued before water testing has been completed.

Boil Water Notice is a notice to the public that tests show coliform bacteria is present in the water system. When coliform bacteria is found, additional testing is conducted to see if the contamination includes fecal coliform bacteria. If fecal coliform bacteria is present, a warning will be issued that the water is contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria. Total coliform bacteria is usually harmless, but does indicate the water has been contaminated. Fecal coliform bacteria can make you sick and is an indication that other harmful bacteria is likely to be in the water.

Do Not Drink the Water notifications can be issued for either bacteria or chemical contaminants which indicate the water is so contaminated that it should not be consumed and boiling or disinfecting the water may not offer adequate protection.

RECOMMENDED USE RESTRICTIONS:

CONSUMPTION OF WATER: Discontinue consumption of tap water regardless of the type of advisory or notification. Turn off icemakers, soda fountains, drinking fountains, and any other water using equipment which requires water that may be ingested. Label all remaining water sources "Do Not Drink". Provide bottled water or drinks. Use only bagged ice from an approved water source. During a "**Boil Water Advisory**" or notification of total coliform contamination, water from the water system can be used for drinking only if it is boiled or disinfected with chlorine before use. If possible, use bottled water for drinking. During a "**Boil Water Notification**" of fecal coliform, contaminated water from the water system must be boiled before

consumption. During a “**Do Not Consume**” notification, water from the water system should not be consumed.

FOOD PREPARATION: During a boil water advisory or notice for total coliform, serve only food heated to a least 165°F as part of the cooking process, packaged foods, and fruit which is peeled before eating or serving; this includes lemons used for beverages. Food service workers should use hand sanitizers after washing their hands and make every effort to reduce bare hand contact of ready to eat foods such as using gloves or sanitized utensils.

During a boil water notice due to fecal coliform or a do not consume notice, discontinue food preparation and serve only pre-packaged foods obtained from an approved commercial source not affected by the boil water notice and fruit which is peeled before eating or serving.

DISHWASHING: During a boil water advisory or notice for total coliform, only commercial dishwashers equipped with hot water (180°F) sanitizing cycles should be used for washing dishes. Facilities not equipped with 180°F dish machines should use only single-service eating and drinking utensils. During a boil water notice for fecal coliform or a do not consume notice, discontinue use of multi-use utensils and use only single service utensils and packaged foods.

HAND WASHING: If contaminated water is used for hand washing, further steps must be taken to inactivate bacteria which may be left on your hands. For food service workers, the use of hand sanitizers is recommended as well as the use of gloves or sanitized utensils.

BATHING: Bathing in contaminated water poses a much lower risk of infection than drinking or washing food. During a boil water advisory or a boil water notice for total coliform bacteria, people with a healthy immune system and intact skin should be able to use the water for bathing if care is taken not to ingest the water. During a boil water notice for fecal coliform bacteria, bathing is not recommended at all. People who have a weaker immune system including those who are infected with HIV/AIDS, cancer and transplant patients taking immunosuppressive drugs and people born with a weakened immune system should be more cautious and avoid contact with contaminated water if possible. Some elderly people and infants may also be an increased risk to infection. Care should be taken to avoid getting contaminated water on open wounds.