



Foodborne Illness Prevention Program Emergency Response Fact Sheet for Licensed Facilities

BIOLOGICALLY CONTAMINATED WATER SUPPLY

Occasionally a community water system serving one or more licensed food service facilities will become contaminated with bacterial or viral organisms. This has the potential of putting the patrons of those facilities at risk. The local public health authority must address the following considerations if this circumstance occurs:

1. Confirm with the Drinking Water Section 971-673-0405 that the community water system is contaminated; determine the nature of the contamination, and how long the problem is expected to remain in effect.
2. Identify all the licensed food service facilities that are served by the contaminated community water system and assure street addresses and telephone numbers are current.
3. Develop an action plan in collaboration with the Drinking Water Section and Foodborne Illness Prevention Program, with alternative procedures for those facilities being served by the community water system. The action plan should include:
 - a. Posting of a public notice at each facility in public view. The notice should include the specific problem, the length of time the problem is expected to exist, and a statement that the restaurant has implemented alternative procedures that allow the restaurant to operate in a safe manner. A health department contact number should also be included.
 - b. Discontinuing the service of the contaminated water. Alternative sources of water must be provided for drinking purposes, washing of food and food contact surfaces, and for cooking.

For Surface Water Contamination:

Boiled water can be used. Water should come to a rolling boil for at least one minute prior to use. Water chemically disinfected in the facility is not allowed.

For Ground Water Contamination:

Boiled or disinfected water can be used.

Be advised that boiling or disinfecting water works only in situations where the water is unsafe because of the presence of bacteria or viral organisms. In fact, heating or boiling water may actually concentrate certain chemical contaminants. If you suspect the water is unsafe because of chemicals, oils, or other poisonous substances do not use the water for drinking. Contact the Drinking Water Section for more information.

- c. Shutting off drinking fountains and posting signs in restrooms to indicate that the water is non-potable.
- d. Eliminating ice making and using ice from an approved source.

- e. Pre-mix soda machines can be used. However, post-mix soda machines and coffee machines that do not boil the water as part of the brewing process cannot be used.
- f. Contaminated water may be used to flush toilets and to clean floors, walls, or ceilings.
- g. Encouraging operators to use disposable dishware and flatware. The appropriateness of using the contaminated water for dishwashing depends upon the method the restaurant uses, and the type of contamination:

Surface Water Contamination:

High temperature dishwashing machines that are working correctly can be used.

Low temperature dishwashing machines **cannot** be used for dishwashing. The three-compartment sink method can be used if potable water from an uncontaminated source or boiled water is used for **all three steps**.

Ground Water Contamination:

All three dishwashing methods are acceptable as long as they are done properly.

- h. Handwashing must be performed with potable water from an uncontaminated source or boiled water. A temporary arrangement for handwashing should be set up using a 5-gallon food grade container for water storage, which has a valve that provides a constant flow of water. A waste container should be provided for wastewater or the water container should drain into an appropriate sink
 - i. Encouraging operators to minimize their menu items and to focus on those items that do not require a great deal of water for preparation.
4. Contact each of the facilities by phone or in person to counsel them regarding the action plan and alternative procedures:
 - a. Encourage operators that may have difficulty meeting the actions and alternatives to close voluntarily.
 - b. Require operators that cannot meet the conditions of the action plan to close their facilities until the water system's contamination is eliminated.
 - c. Document all contacts with facilities regarding the implementation of the alternative procedures. Also document whether the operator agreed to implement the alternative procedures in lieu of closure.
 5. Spot check a sample of the facilities to assess how well the action plans and alternative procedures have been implemented. Be prepared to close those facilities not using alternative methods.
 6. Coordinate with the water system operator and the Drinking Water Section to assure that the supply is adequately sanitized after the system is repaired and before water is served to the public.

If water is hauled in and stored at the facility, make sure that this is done in a safe and sanitary manner. Point of use or point of entry treatment devices may be an acceptable interim measure, depending upon the contaminant of concern. A list of approved devices can be obtained from the Drinking Water Section if this is an option.



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Activity	Surface Water Contamination	Ground Water Contamination
Cooking	Boiled or potable water only	Boiled or potable water only
Cleaning food contact surfaces	Boiled or potable water only	Boiled, potable or disinfected water OK
Dishwashing	High temp machines or 3-compartment sink with boiled or potable water only	All dishwashing methods acceptable if done properly
Handwashing	Boiled or potable water only	Boiled or potable water only
Ice making	Turn off machine until potable water is available	Turn off machine until potable water is available
Pre-mix soda machines (in bulk, packaged in kegs or bag-in-box and ready to use)	Acceptable to use	Acceptable to use
Post-mix soda machines (boxes of syrup and CO2, using the facility water source)	Turn off until potable water is available	Turn off until potable water is available
Coffee machines	If water is boiled as part of the brewing process, acceptable to use	If water is boiled as part of the brewing process, acceptable to use

- It is recommended to use disposable dishes and flatware
- Contaminated water can be used for flushing toilets and cleaning floors, walls and ceilings

Operator must close their facility if they cannot use the alternatives listed above