MONTANA
Department of Public Health & Human Services

FOOD & CONSUMER SAFETY
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LICENSED ESTABLISHMENT GUIDANCE

- WATER EMERGENCIES -

Anytime your water could be unsafe, you have a water emergency. Examples include boil orders from DEQ, restricted use orders from the local health authority or sanitarian, or when water is temporarily not available. This guidance is for any establishment connected to a public water system or nonpublic water system serving the public.

1. Stop Using the Water.

- Turn off drinking fountains. Remove single service cups at sinks.
- Food, beverages or ice may pose a health risk if unsafe water was used as an ingredient.

2. Contact Your Local Sanitarian.

- Your registered sanitarian can tell you if food and beverages can be safely used or must be thrown away.
- Wholesale manufacturers must contact the Food & Drug Program within Food & Consumer Safety at 4064442408.

3. Post Signs.

- Specific language may be required if under a DEQ boil order. Signs are available from your local sanitarian.
- Place a sign at each point of use where customers and staff are likely to drink or wash with water. Examples are bathroom sinks and kitchen sinks.

4. Change Operations By Using a Different Source of Water or Boiling Your Water.

- If you choose to remain open, your plan of operation must be approved by the local sanitarian.
- During a boil water order, bring water to a rolling boil (not just a simmer) for at least one minute. Store and serve from a clean sanitized covered container. *Note:* there are times when boiling water will make the hazard worse, such as when the water contains high nitrates or chemical contamination.
- Alternative water sources are bottled water served from the original container, water from a different public water supply system stored in a clean potable water container or holding tank, or water delivered from a licensed potable water hauler. Ice must come from a separate licensed ice manufacturer.

Dishes and Laundry

Dishes may be safely washed, rinsed, sanitized and completely air-dried. The sanitizer must be an approved chemical disinfectant or 180°F in the final rinsing. Laundry may be safely washed and mechanically heat dried. Complete drying is important.

When Can I Use My Water Again?

- Once your water has tested safe, follow sanitarian guidance for flushing the system. At a minimum, flush all faucets and drinking fountains with cold water for at least 5 minutes.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize food and beverage equipment connected to water lines following manufacturer's instructions. Examples are post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee urns, ice machines, and dishwashers.
- Replace or clean in-line filtration systems.

Local Contact Information:

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