



## WHAT IS A “BOIL WATER ADVISORY?”

A boil water advisory, or boil water communication, is a public notice issued by water utilities or health agencies advising customers to boil tap water before consumption. Communications are issued when an event has occurred within the water system that has, or could have, introduced microorganisms that have the potential to make customers sick.

The majority of events are associated with water main breaks and water service leaks. Additional event examples include loss of pressure in the water distribution system, treatment disruptions, power outages, floods and other unexpected water quality issues that can lead to drinking water quality concerns.

After an event has occurred, the necessary water system infrastructure corrective actions are completed. Then, water samples collected from the impacted water service area are analyzed to ensure safe drinking water quality for our customers. These bacteriological testing methods take time, so customers are instructed to boil water to prevent potential ingestion of microorganisms while awaiting test results.

Two types of boil water advisories exist: **precautionary** and **mandatory** notices. The most common is a precautionary advisory, which is issued when the public water system experiences a loss in positive water pressure. This includes a pressure drop below 20 PSI or when water service is interrupted.

Water utilities or health agencies issue a mandatory boil water notice to the affected areas when a bacteriological impact to the water system has been confirmed through testing. If microorganisms are confirmed via testing, the boil water advisory will then be prolonged until water samples return satisfactory test results.

## SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Customers should adhere to the following actions when a boil water advisory is issued:

1. Bring all water to a rolling boil for at least one minute and let it cool before use.
2. Use boiled or bottled water for drinking, making ice, hand washing dishes/utensils, brushing teeth and all food preparation activities, including infant formula mixes.
3. Continue to boil water until you are notified that the boil water communication has been lifted.



## **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST!**

Additional safety reminders in the event of a “boil water” advisory include the following:

- Do not use home filtering devices in place of boiling water or using bottled water, as most home water filters do *not* provide adequate protection.
- Use bottled water, or freshly boiled and cooled tap water, for food preparation activities.
- Keep a good amount of boiled or bottled water in the refrigerator for drinking.
- Be cautious and do *not* swallow water while showering or bathing.
- Provide pets with bottled water or boiled water after it is thoroughly cooled.
- Use only boiled or bottled water to treat minor injuries. (When showering or bathing, avoid allowing water to come into contact with open wounds.)
- Do *not* wash fruit or vegetable/salad items with tap water during the boil water period.

### **HOW LONG DO BOIL WATER ADVISORIES LAST?**

Water samples are generally collected the same day the water system event is corrected. Certain situations, such as an after-hours repair, may dictate that samples are to be collected the following day.

In order for a boil water communication to be lifted, the water sample testing facility must inform the water utility agency or health agency of satisfactory test results to ensure safe drinking water quality for customers.

Typically, ***precautionary*** boil water advisories may last one to two days, whereas a ***mandatory*** boil water notice may take longer, pending satisfactory test results. Customers will receive a follow-up cancellation notice once *all* corrective actions are complete and customers no longer need to boil water.

Customers can resume normal water consumption and usage when the boil water advisory is rescinded. Should customers experience cloudy or discolored water, open the water faucets within the household for a few minutes until the water runs clear.

*Questions?  
Contact the City of Myrtle Beach  
Public Works Department at 843-918-2000.*