

TOWN OF STEADY BROOK

BOIL WATER ADVISORY

FACT SHEET

What is a Boil Water Advisory (BWA) and why is it issued?

A BWA is issued to protect the community from a waterborne emergency. The advisory is issued as a precautionary measure when there is a concern that contamination may have occurred during water treatment or due to water main repair. Many water line breaks or routine maintenance repairs may require the issuance of a Boil Water Advisory.

What circumstances will cause a Boil Water Advisory to be issued?

- ✓ Malfunction in the chlorination treatment system
- ✓ If untreated water reaches the distribution system
- ✓ Loss of pressure in the entire distribution system or significant portion of the system
- ✓ A water main break where dirt and debris have entered the distribution system
- ✓ When test samples indicate the presence of total coliform bacteria

What are total coliform bacteria?

Total coliform bacteria are a collection of microorganisms that live in large numbers in the intestines of humans and animals, as well as in most soils and surface water. A sub-group of these microorganisms is the fecal coliform bacteria, the most common member being E. coli. These bacteria occur naturally in lakes and streams, but if detected in drinking water indicate that the water is contaminated with human or animal waste and therefore may pose a health risk to people who drink it. The water treatment process removes these bacteria from the water, but events such as a water main break, loss of pressure, or a malfunction in the water distribution or treatment system may allow bacteria to enter water lines. Boiling water vigorously for one minute will kill these bacteria and make the water safe to drink.

What does the town do to prevent contamination of the water system?

- ✓ Regular inspections and maintenance of the distribution system
- ✓ Regular inspections and maintenance of the treatment system
- ✓ Inspections of the Steady Brook Protected Watershed Area
- ✓ Hydrant flushing
- ✓ Chlorine treatment
- ✓ Daily sampling of chlorine levels
- ✓ Routine bacterial sampling by the Government Service Centre

How will the public be advised of a Boil Water Advisory?

Some or all of the following notification methods may be used, depending on the size and the affected area by the Boil Water Advisory:

- ✓ Local radio stations
- ✓ Email to residents (with names on the town's email listing)
- ✓ Sign located at the 4-way STOP area in the town
- ✓ Call residents or hand deliver notices to affected areas
- ✓ Notification to the Department of Government Services

Instructions for Using Water in the Home During a Boil Water Advisory

During an advisory, it is essential that all water to be used for the following activities be boiled:

Holding water at a rolling boil for at least one (1) minutes will inactivate all waterborne pathogenic micro-organisms. Water can be boiled in a pot or kettle.

Under most circumstances, it is not necessary to boil water used for other household purposes. Adults, adolescents and older children may shower, bathe or wash using tap water but should avoid swallowing the water. Toddlers and infants can be sponge bathed. In most situations, dishes and laundry may be washed in tap water, either by hand or machine.

In the event of a waterborne outbreak declared by the Town or the Government Service Centre, it may be necessary to take additional precautions.

Do I still need to boil my water if I have a filter system on my faucet or refrigerator?

Most point-of-use (POU) filters are designed to improve aesthetics of water (improve taste and odor), not remove harmful bacteria. Check your manufacturer's instructions for your filter. If in doubt, you should boil your water.

Since an advisory is a precautionary measure, will I get sick if I drink the water? and What if I drank some water before I found out about the advisory?

Until test results show the water is safe to drink, you should not drink the water without boiling it first. During an advisory, chances are, if you are in good health, you will not get sick from drinking the water; however, young children, some elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems should not drink the water until it is deemed safe to drink. Symptoms of illness caused by bacteria in the water may include diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. Please note these symptoms are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice.

How long will the Boil Water Advisory remain in effect?

- ✓ An advisory or notice will remain in effect until test samples show the water is safe to drink. Testing for bacteria requires an incubation period and requires 18-24 hours to complete. As a result, advisories are in effect for at least 36 hours. Each Boil Water Advisory is different making it impossible to predict how long it will remain in effect. It will not be lifted until testing shows that the water meets public health standards. Two consecutive bacteria samples indicating that no coliforms are present will be required before the Town will be given permission to lift the Boil Water Advisory. These consecutive samples have to be collected by the Government Service Centre.

Who has the authority to lift the Boil Water Advisory?

- ✓ The Government Service Centre (only) has the authority to notify the Town that the Boil Water Advisory is lifted.
- ✓ The Government Service Centre will contact the Town when the Boil Water Advisory is lifted.
- ✓ The Town will advise residents when permission is obtained to lift the advisory.

How will the Town notify residents and business that the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted?

Upon notification that a Boil Water Advisory has been lifted, the staff shall take the following steps:

- ✓ An email will be sent to residents immediately giving notification to of any or all areas that the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted. The email shall include any additional steps to be taken by residents or business to flush their water system to ensure that no contaminated water remains in their pipes.
- ✓ A notice shall be placed in the sign board at the 4 way STOP area.
- ✓ A fax and/or phone call and/or email shall be sent to affected businesses immediately giving notification to of any or all areas that the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted. The fax and/or phone call and/or email shall include any additional steps to be taken by residents or business to flush their water system to ensure that no contaminated water remains in their pipes.
- ✓ A public service announcement may be aired on local radios stations.

What are some steps that can be taken to flush residential and commercial water systems?

Following the lifting of a Boil Water Advisory, it is suggested that:

- ✓ Flush building water lines by allowing both hot and cold water to run for several minutes at each fixture
- ✓ Clean faucets and aerators
- ✓ Flush automatic ice makers, and make a new batch of ice
- ✓ Dispose of ice cubes made with tap water that had not been boiled during the advisory
- ✓ Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle
- ✓ Run drinking fountains for one minute
- ✓ Run water coolers with direct water connections for five minutes

- ✓ Replace or clean filters on faucet filtration systems or whole house/building per manufacturer's recommendations

What steps could be recommended when a Boil Water Advisory is in effect?

- ✓ Water used for cooking, making ice, washing food or brushing teeth should be boiled for at least one (1) minute before use. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.
- ✓ Bottled water should be used.
- ✓ Do not use ice made from tap water.
- ✓ Do not use water to make juice or drinks.
- ✓ Cook only with tap water ONLY if the food will be boiled for at least one (1) minute.
- ✓ You do not need to boil water for showering, bathing, laundry or washing dishes.
- ✓ Infant and toddlers may be sponge bathed.
- ✓ People with severely compromised immune systems and some elderly may be at an increased risk.

What steps can be taken if water service is disrupted for more than 12 hours?

In the event that the water distribution system is out of service for several hours or for an extended period of time, individual residents or businesses may ask for some information. It may be suggested that:

- ✓ Turn off all appliances that draw water, such as ice makers, hot water heaters, heat pumps, etc to prevent damage.
- ✓ A water heater is a potential source of drinking and cooking water if it has not used water since a pipe break. Turn off the incoming water valve and power to the water heater. Water may be drawn through the bottom of the water heater. When water service is restored, make sure the tank is refilled before restoring power to the heater.
- ✓ Do not use swimming pool water for drinking or cooking.
- ✓ If your toilet works, but you do not have running water to refill the tank, pool water or other non-disinfected may be used. Minimize flushing.

Where can I get more information about Boil Water Advisories and water safety, in general?

- ✓ Town Office: (709) 634-7601, email: townclerk@steadybrook.com
- ✓ Government Service Centre: (709) 637-2903
- ✓ Western Regional Hospital: 637-5000 (Ext. 5419)
- ✓ Town website: www.steadybrook.com