

BOIL WATER EVENTS - Basic Information for All Consumers

Q1 - Why was a boil water notice issued for my water?

A boil water notice is usually issued to protect consumers when it is possible that drinking water has been contaminated by microorganisms that can cause illness (i.e. germs, or pathogens). Common reasons for a boil water notice include loss of pressure in the system, loss of disinfection, and water quality concerns caused by other events such as water line breaks, power outages and floods.

Q2 - How long will the need to boil water continue?

A boil water event typically lasts 48 hours, but it can be longer and may last several days. How long depends on what caused the need to boil, how quickly the problem can be corrected, and how long it takes for laboratory results to confirm your water is again ready to drink. Your water utility and your local health department office can answer questions on how long your boil water notice might last and advise you when you can return to normal water use.

Q3 - How do I boil my water so that it is safe to drink?

Bring water to a **FULL ROLLING BOIL** for **1 MINUTE**, then allow the water to **COOL BEFORE USE**. Because water may take 30 minutes to cool, plan ahead. Make up a batch of boiled water in advance so you will not be tempted to use it hot and risk scalds or burns. Boiled and cooled water may be used for drinking, cooking, and washing.

Q4 - What is an acceptable alternate source for safe drinking water?

Acceptable alternate sources for drinking water include:

- Bottled water that is certified for sale in New York State
- Water from another public water supply (one that is not under the boil water notice)
- Water from a New York State certified bulk water hauler
- Water provided in a State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) tanker or water buffalo

Roadside springs are **not** a sure source of safe drinking water. They are seldom monitored and no one is in charge of keeping them safe. If you use roadside spring water for drinking or food preparation, we recommend that you boil (and then cool) it before use.

Q5 - Is it safe to use bottled water?

Bottled water that is certified for sale in New York State is a good alternate water source and may be used for drinking, cooking, and washing with no further treatment. Bottled water may be preferable when boiling is not possible or is inconvenient.

Q6 - Is it safe to use water from a bulk water provider?

Water provided by a State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) tanker or from a New York State certified bulk water hauler can be used for drinking, cooking, and washing with no further

1 treatment. Depending on the boil water event, temporary water stations may be set up in your
2 community where you can fill containers for home use.

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4 If you arrange for bulk water on your own, you should ask the hauler to verify that:

- 5 • the bulk hauler is certified in New York State (you can ask for their certification number),
- 6 • the water to be delivered is from a source that is approved by the Health Department, or from
7 another public water supply that is not under the boil water notice, and
- 8 • water will be transported in a sanitized water tanker (certified haulers have standard procedures
9 for this).

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11 A list of New York State certified bulk water haulers is available online at
12 http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/water/drinking/bulk_bottle/bulkwter.htm

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14 **Q7 - What container should I use to obtain water from another location?**

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16 The container you use to get water from an alternate source or temporary water station can greatly
17 affect your water. Never use a container that has ever held a chemical, gasoline or other fuel. Use
18 only clean containers that you know are safe and that are free of all dirt and contaminants.

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20 **Q8 - Does my water treatment system provide enough protection?**

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22 No! Most treatment devices installed for consumers were not designed to remove pathogens, or
23 are not properly maintained and should not be relied on to protect you during a boil water event.
24 Common treatment devices that have limited or no ability to remove pathogens include: carbon
25 filters; water softeners; ion exchange units; sediment filters; chlorine removers; and aerators.