

Understanding a Water Boil Notice



WHAT IS A BOIL WATER NOTICE?

It's a notification that advises residents to boil their tap water used for consumption (drinking, cooking, making ice, etc.), because their water may be contaminated. A Boil Water Notice is in effect until laboratory results show that water is safe from bacterial contamination. The tests usually take 24 hours to complete. Bathing, washing clothes or dishes and other activities where water is used externally, should not pose a health risk.

WHEN IS A BOIL WATER NOTICE ISSUED

Because delivering clean water is our business, Soquel Creek Water District adheres to stringent water quality testing and monitoring requirements to ensure that every drop of water delivered to your home or business meets or exceeds state and federal health and safety standards. We back our commitment of maintaining high water quality standards by dedicating the necessary human and technological resources to quality assurance programs.

Sometimes, however, there is a possibility that your water has become susceptible to contamination. The occurrences listed below may increase the risk of contaminants entering the drinking water treatment and distribution system:

- A water system completely loses water pressure or the pressure goes below 20 psi (pounds per square inch)
- A pipeline breaks
- A distribution system interruption takes place (whether planned or as a result of man-made or natural disasters, such as hurricanes)
- Water samples indicate the presence of waterborne pathogens
- A cross-connection is discovered that may have contaminated the water supply
- Increased run-off enters the drinking water source (e.g. following heavy rains)

When we issue a Boil Water Notice, testing has generally not yet been conducted to confirm or deny the presence of contamination in your water. Sometimes, the chances of water contamination are remote, but we don't want to take any chances with your family's health. Soquel Creek Water District takes protection of public health very seriously. In most cases, issuing a Boil Water Notice is a precautionary measure for the safety of our customers.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Do not consume your water without boiling it first. Use boiled or bottled water for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, and food preparation until further notice.

To ensure destruction of all harmful bacteria and other microbes that might be present, a boil water notice will advise you to boil water used for drinking, cooking, and ice making. Bring water to a vigorous, rolling boil and then boil for two minutes (don't forget to cool the water before consuming it). In lieu of boiling, you may purchase bottled water or obtain water from some other suitable source.

HOW MUCH DOES BOILING WATER ACCOMPLISH?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), boiling is considered the most effective and the safest method of water disinfection. You may find that boiled water tastes rather flat. To get rid of the blandness, aerate it by pouring it back and forth from one container to another and allow it to stand for a few hours, or add a pinch of salt for each quart or liter of water boiled.

WHAT DOES THE DISTRICT DO WHEN THERE IS A BOIL WATER NOTICE?

We are required to collect samples from the water source (e.g. a well), the original site where contamination may have been found, as well as upstream and downstream of that point, and get them tested for any continuing contamination before we can declare the water clean. Only after satisfactory lab results and, under certain circumstances, an approval from the state's regulatory agency, can we then lift a Boil Water Notice.

HOW DOES THE DISTRICT NOTIFY CUSTOMERS THAT A BOIL WATER NOTICE IS ISSUED?

Water utilities are required to notify you by newspaper, radio, TV, hand-delivery or any combination of the above if your water doesn't meet EPA or state standards or if there is a waterborne disease emergency. We'll use the same method to notify you that your Boil Water Notice was rescinded.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

- [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [EPA](http://www.epa.gov)