

Commonwealth of Kentucky

Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Statewide News Release

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Winter Storm Leaves Behind Potential Water, Food Safety Risks *Public Advised to Follow Precautions During Boil Water Advisories*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 27, 2015) – Many private residences, businesses, schools and other public facilities across the Commonwealth, especially in eastern Kentucky, have been impacted or closed for an extended period of time following the recent winter storm, creating the potential for increased risks related to water and food safety.

Individuals and facilities affected by boil water advisories and water shortages can take steps to assure their water is safe. Officials with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) caution that unclean water can be a source of contamination for food, utensils, hands and other surfaces during a water emergency and precautions should be taken.

“For those under boil water advisories or experiencing water shortages, it is important that a supply of safe water is available for the purposes of drinking and food preparation,” said Dr. Stephanie Mayfield, DPH commissioner.

During a boil water advisory, all drinking water fountains in public places should be turned off or covered to prevent them from being used. Only bottled or bulk water from an approved source may be used for drinking. If bulk water is used, water should be dispensed from a food grade container that is covered or otherwise protected. Water should be dispensed into single-service (disposable) cups that are disposed of after use.

Any facility serving food should take precautions to ensure that all food is safe to eat during a boil water advisory. The following guidelines should be followed to assure that customers and staff do not become ill from the consumption of contaminated food or water during a boil water advisory.

- Turn off ice machines, drinking fountains, produce misters, bottled water refill machines, fountain drink equipment and running water dipper wells, such those used for ice cream scooping.
- Discard ice and beverages made with contaminated water.
- Use only packaged ice from commercially approved facilities outside the affected area. Leave the ice machine off until the boil water advisory is lifted, then clean and sanitize the unit following the manufacturer’s suggested guidelines. Let the machine make ice for one hour and dispose of the ice.
- Use only bottled or properly treated water for drinking, cooking, food preparation and washing produce.
- Potable water should be used for hand washing in public facilities. Temporary hand washing stations supplied with potable water should be used while under boil water advisories. Water for these stations must come from an approved source and be protected during dispensing.
- Use only canned or bottled drinks. Coffee and tea should be made from bottled, properly treated water.

- Use only prepackaged, ready-to-eat food items and commercially prepared salads in deli areas. Do not cut or grind meat.
- Only use single service or disposable eating and drinking utensils.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize utensils using only potable water from approved sources.
- Post signs or copies of the water system's health advisory. Develop a plan to notify and educate employees about water emergency procedures.

Private residences should also take precautions to ensure that they are protected from the potential dangers posed by contaminated water during a boil water advisory.

- Private residences should use bottled or properly treated water in preparing meals, drinks and washing produce and dishes.
- If bottled or properly treated water is not available, water should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute and allowed to cool before use in food preparation or drinks.
- Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible. Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled or properly treated water.
- Dispose of all ice in ice makers that was made during the boil water advisory.
- Hand washing in the home may be accomplished using hot water from the tap and soap. It is recommended that this be followed up with the use of hand sanitizer.
- Normal bathing may take place during a boil water advisory, however be careful not to swallow any water and avoid water contact with any open cuts or wounds. Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

For more information, please see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/dwa-comm-toolbox/before/tools/What-to-Do-During-a-Boil-Water-Advisory.docx> or contact the Department for Public Health's State Health Operation Center at 502-564-5459 or 502-564-5460.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and health care programs, including Medicaid, the Department for Community Based Services and the Department for Public Health. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full and part-time employees throughout the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.