



PRECAUTIONARY BOIL WATER NOTICE

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions



What is a Precautionary Boil Water Notice?

A Precautionary Boil Water Notice (PBWN) is a public notification issued by the City of Fort Lauderdale, in consultation with the Broward County Health Department, advising citizens to boil tap water before consuming it (e.g., drinking, brushing teeth, washing fruits and vegetables, and making homemade ice with tap water).

A PBWN is only issued after careful consideration by the City and the applicable regulatory agencies as a preventative measure to protect public health.

Other than citizens in the City of Fort Lauderdale, who else might be affected by a PBWN?

Fort Lauderdale's water is also used by citizens in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Oakland Park, Port Everglades Authority, Village of Sea Ranch Lakes, Wilton Manors and sections of Davie and Tamarac. As a result, a PBWN may also apply to these areas.

Why would the City issue a PBWN?

If during a hurricane, tropical storm, or unforeseen emergency, the City of Fort Lauderdale's water system loses power and/or positive water pressure, or is temporarily interrupted, the City may issue a PBWN. In most situations, a loss of power or positive water pressure will not result in a PBWN; however, in certain situations, a PBWN may be issued as a precaution to protect public health.

What are some reasons the water system could lose power or water pressure?

There are a variety of reasons why the water system may lose power or positive water pressure. For example, during a hurricane or tropical storm, water service may be interrupted when uprooted trees break water pipes or electrical power to a treatment plant is interrupted.

Scheduled maintenance and repair to the distribution system may require water service interruptions and reduced water pressure; however, it is extremely rare for the City to issue a PBWN for these types of situations.

Why is positive water pressure important in the distribution system?

Positive water pressure in the distribution system helps minimize the potential of impurities entering the drinking water being delivered to homes and businesses.

What could happen if the water system loses pressure?

When positive water pressure is lost due to an unforeseen event, it is possible for impurities to enter the pipes and affect drinking water. These impurities may cause discomfort or illness if the water is consumed. While the odds of this happening are extremely low, to be extra cautious, a PBWN will be issued while routine bacteriological sampling is conducted. As a precaution, it is important to disinfect tap water before consuming it to kill any impurities that may have entered the water, or use an alternative source of water, such as commercially bottled water.

How can I disinfect drinking water if a PBWN is issued?

If a PBWN is issued, you should disinfect any water being used for consumption by using one of the methods below. As an alternative, you may also buy commercially bottled water for consumption and food preparation.

Boil the water - Bring the water to a rolling boil and let it boil for a minimum of one minute.

Disinfect the water - If you cannot boil water, you can disinfect the water by doing the following:

Clear tap water

- If the water coming out of the tap is not cloudy, put eight drops of unscented common household bleach (which is about 1/8 teaspoon) that has five to six percent active ingredients into one gallon of tap water. A food grade container may be used.
- Shake to mix it, then
- Allow the water to stand for 30 minutes before consuming it.

Cloudy tap water

- If the water coming out of the tap is cloudy, use 16 drops of unscented common household bleach (approximately 1/4 teaspoon)
- Shake to mix it, then
- Allow the water to stand for 30 minutes before consuming it.

Purify the water - Water may also be purified by using water purification tablets or iodine, which many sports and camping stores sell.

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

Most home filters are designed to improve the taste and/or odor of your water, not remove bacteria. Check with the faucet manufacturer for more information regarding your system. If there is ever any doubt, as a precaution, you should boil your water or use commercially bottled water even if you have a filtering system.

Can I still take a bath or shower when a PBWN has been issued?

Tap water may be used for taking showers or baths, shaving, and washing, as long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water to enter your eyes, nose, or mouth. Children and disabled individuals should have their bath supervised to ensure water is not ingested. The time spent bathing should be minimized.

Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who are immunosuppressed*, have recent surgical wounds, or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water for cleansing until the PBWN is lifted. (**Individuals who are immunosuppressed may have weakened immune systems that make it more difficult to battle infections. For example, those undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatment for cancer or those receiving medications following an organ transplant may be immunosuppressed. If you are uncertain, please contact your physician for more information.*)

Can I still wash dishes or laundry when a PBWN has been issued?

It is okay to wash laundry when a PBWN has been issued. Dishes may also be washed, but you should use hot, soapy water. Rinse dishes with boiled water. You may add one tablespoon of unscented common household bleach for each gallon of dish water as a precaution.

What can business and other non-residential site owners do to help inform the public about a PBWN?

Businesses and non-residential sites can help inform the public by posting notices at or disabling water fountains and ice machines during the PBWN. If water is provided to visitors or employees, use commercially produced bottled water for drinking or beverage preparation (coffee). Food service operations have additional requirements from their regulatory agency.

How long will a PBWN be in effect?

The PBWN will remain in effect until further notice from the City. This can be a minimum of one day to several days while bacteriological tests are being conducted and repairs are being made to the system.

The City will only lift the PBWN after all laboratory tests confirm the water quality meets or exceeds all required drinking water standards.

A PBWN may be lifted in sections of the City, as pipes are cleared and the water is deemed okay to drink.

How can I find out if a PBWN has been lifted?

The City of Fort Lauderdale will issue an advisory when the PBWN is lifted. Citizens are encouraged to stay tuned to local radio and television stations for updates. The City will post information to its website at www.fortlauderdale.gov and citizens may also contact the 24-hour Customer Service Center at 954.828.8000 for information.

Are there any precautions I should take once the PBWN is lifted?

Yes, you should flush your household pipes, water fountains, etc. prior to drinking or cooking with the water. Flushing means simply letting cold water run through the pipes for a minimum of one minute to ensure that no potentially contaminated water remains inside them.

Any ice made during the PBWN should be disposed of. If you have an automatic ice maker, allow it to make three batches of ice and then discard that ice.

Who can I contact for additional information about PBWNs?

You may contact the City of Fort Lauderdale 24-hour Customer Service Center at 954.828.8000 or online at www.fortlauderdale.gov/customerservice.

Customer Service may also be reached via LauderServ, the City's Android-based mobile application. For more information about LauderServ or how to download the application, please visit www.fortlauderdale.gov/lauderserv.

You may also contact the Broward County Health Department at 954.467.4700, ext. 4231.