

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Water Supply & Geoscience

WATER USE ADVISORIES*

1. Water Use Advisory Descriptions

- a. Boil Water Advisory (BWA): Issued by a water system which advises customers to boil the water before drinking, cooking, other potable water uses due to the potential for the water supply to be contaminated with disease-causing microorganisms.
- b. Do Not Drink /Do Not Consume Advisory: Public Notification issued by a water system which advises customers not to use the water supply for potable purposes and only advocates its use for sanitary and fire-fighting needs.
- c. Do Not Use Advisory: Public Notification issued by a water system which advises customers not to use the water supply for any purpose, including sanitary and fire-fighting needs.

2. Triggering Events

- a. A Boil Water Advisory is issued when:
 - i. An acute bacteriological violation occurred (confirmed presence of fecal coliform or E. coli bacteria) or failure to test for fecal coliform or E. coli when any repeat sample tests positive for coliform.
 - ii. The confirmed presence of other pathogens such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium at a level, and under circumstances, that New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and New Jersey Department of Health (DOH) deem a risk.
 - iii. Violation of the turbidity MCL of 1 NTU, where the primacy agency determines after consultation that a Tier 1 notice is required or where consultation does not occur in 24 hours after the system learns of violation.
 - iv. High turbidity levels in filtered surface water that indicate the potential for pathogen breakthrough and interference with disinfection efficiency as follows:
 1. Sustained turbidity readings greater than 1 NTU for 6 or more hours;
 2. Confirmed turbidity level greater than 5 NTU.
 - v. A water treatment plant malfunction occurs which results in the following waters being discharged into a distribution system:
 1. Unfiltered surface water
 2. Non-Chlorinated Surface water
 3. Non-Chlorinated Groundwater under the direct influence of surface water
 4. Non-Chlorinated Groundwater with a known history coliform contamination

* For additional information or guidance contact:

- Bureau of Water System Engineering during business hours at 609-292-2957.
- In case of after-hour emergency questions call the NJDEP hotline at 1-877-WARN DEP (1-877-927-6337)

- vi. Portions of the system without water or with negative pressure zones due to a water treatment plant failure (i.e. extensive flooding or power outage), water main break, pump failure or other water distribution system malfunction.
 - vii. The occurrence of a cross connection or known back siphon episode with an unapproved water supply in which the microbiological quality of the water may be compromised.
 - viii. State or local health department officials have confirmed a waterborne disease outbreak with the water supply as the suspected disease source.
 - ix. Other violations or situations with significant potential for serious adverse effects on human health as a result of short term exposure, as determined by the primacy agency either in its regulations or on a case-by-case basis
- b. A Do Not Drink Advisory is issued when:
- i. A violation of the MCL for nitrate, nitrite, or total nitrate and nitrite; or when a confirmation sample is not taken within 24 hours of the system's receipt of the first sample showing an exceedance of the nitrate or nitrite MCL.
 - ii. Chemical overfeed in to the water supply.
 - iii. Occurrence of a waterborne emergency caused by the accidental or intentional introduction of chemical or radiological contaminants.
- c. A Do Not Use Advisory is issued (primarily on a case by case basis) when:
- i. Any form of contamination in which contact is hazardous to public health.
 - ii. Treatment error leading to water with a low or high pH which could cause chemical burns.
 - iii. Severe damage to utility infrastructure (such as electric and gas service) that prohibits affected populations from being able to boil water.

3. Authority & Notification Time Frames

- a. Based on the severity of the event and to ensure timely notification to affected customers/population served, the following entities have authority to issue a water use advisory:
 - i. The water system
 - ii. The local/county health department
 - iii. The NJDEP
- b. *The affected water system is required to notify the DEP regardless of the entity making the determination.*
- c. Provide notification following any unplanned incident or emergency that may tend to lessen the quality or pressure of delivered water, or increase the likelihood of the delivery of water that does not meet standards, as outlined in the table below:

Timeframes for Public Notifications by Water Systems:

TIMELINE	ACTION	REG / BEST PRACTICE
1 hour	Immediate notification should be provided, within one hour, to specific critical and sensitive users, such as hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, dialysis centers, surgical centers, endoscopy suites, schools, daycares, etc.	Best Practice
6 hours	Report to the NJDEP – Bureau of Water System Engineering at (609) 292-2957 during business hours and to the NJDEP Hotline at 1-877-927-6337 (WARN DEP) outside of business hours. However, all community water systems are encouraged to report any reportable incidents initially through the NJDEP Hotline to ensure proper documentation and tracking.	N.J.A.C. 7:10-2.4(b)
6 hours	Timely notification of the incident/situation should be provided to affected stakeholders, such as local police, fire, public works, health department, schools districts and mayor and council of affected municipalities, and the appropriate local/county health departments and offices of emergency management.	Best Practice
24 hours	Provide notice to persons served as soon as practical but within 24 hours after learning of the Tier 1 violation/situation consistent with the delivery timeframes and methods specified for a Tier 1 Violation in Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. Distribution of the advisory may be limited based on hydraulic or physically isolated service area, subject to NJDEP approval.	40 CFR 141.201 et seq.

4. Content Requirements For All Notifications: The notification must contain specific information (required elements and health effects language) to be considered complete and must address the following:

- a. Description of the violation or situation, including the contaminant(s) of concern, and (as applicable) the contaminant level(s).
- b. When the violation or situation occurred.
- c. Any potential adverse health effects from drinking the water, using mandatory language as indicated for a Tier 1 notification.
- d. The population at risk, including subpopulations that may be particularly vulnerable if exposed to the contaminant in their drinking water.
- e. Whether alternate water supplies should be used.
- f. Actions consumers should take, including when they should seek medical help, if known.
- g. Description of activities to correct the violation or situation.
- h. Expected timeline to return to compliance or resolve the situation.

- i. System name, business address, internet address, and phone number as a source of additional information concerning the notice.
- j. A statement encouraging recipients to distribute the notice to others, where applicable, using the standard language below:

"Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail."

- k. For Boil Water Advisories also include:

- i. *Water Boiling Time:* Vigorous and complete boil for 1 minute (not including the time it takes to come to a complete boil) to mitigate any possible microbial pathogen contamination
- ii. *Standard Language:* Effective immediately and until further notice, bring tap water to a rolling boil for one minute and allow the tap water to cool before using.
- iii. *Potable water uses include:* drinking, cooking, preparing foods, washing vegetables and fruit, making ice cubes, brushing teeth, mixing formula, juices, drinks.

5. **Delivery Requirements:** A Public Water System must use one or more of the following methods to effectively deliver the notice to consumers [40 CFR 141.202(c)]:

- a. Radio
- b. Television
- c. Telephone Notification Systems (i.e. Reverse 911)
- d. Social Media Networks (i.e. Twitter, Facebook)
- e. Hand or direct delivery (Fliers or door hangers)
- f. Posting in conspicuous locations
- g. Additional methods, such as newspaper, website postings, direct delivery to hospitals, clinics, apartment buildings, use of sound trucks, may be needed to ensure the notice is provided in a manner reasonably calculated to reach all persons served.

6. **Criteria to Lift a Water Use Advisory:**

- a. **A self-imposed Boil Water Advisory** can be lifted by the affected water system based on:
 - i. The implementation and completion of corrective actions/remedial measures
 - ii. Receipt of satisfactory water quality results (bacteriological and/or turbidity) coupled with chlorine residuals of 0.2 mg/l or greater throughout the distribution system.

- iii. The minimum number of water quality samples required is based on the number of persons affected as established by guidance.
 - 1. For any acute violation incurred, the minimum number of bacteriological samples to be collected must follow the normal protocol for repeat sampling, as per the Total Coliform Rule.
 - 2. With regard to a system-wide BWA, the minimum number of samples to be collected must follow the number specified in the chart below or the required number of bacteriological repeat samples, whichever is greater.

Population Served	Minimum # of Samples
25-1000	3
1001-2000	4
2001-3000	5
3001-4000	6
4001-7000	7
7001-10,000	8
10,001-50,000	9
50,001-130,000	10
> 130,000	10% of Required Monthly Samples

- iv. Samples (which are not required repeat samples) must be collected at separate, representative locations within the distribution system on the same day.
 - v. If 10 samples or less are collected, all sample results must be negative to remove the BWA.
 - vi. If a small or medium sized system (as defined in NJAC 7:10-3) opts to collect more than 10 samples, no more than one sample may be positive to remove the BWA.
 - vii. To remove a system-wide BWA for a water supply serving a population greater than 130,000, the allowable percentage of positive sample results should be no more than the "normal" monthly average of positive samples reported by the system, based upon the preceding two years of monthly bacteriological reports submitted.
 - viii. If a BWA is restricted to a smaller distribution system area or zone, the required number of bacteriological samples should be proportionally lower.
 - ix. In conjunction with the above, sufficient water displacement has occurred in the distribution system to eliminate water that was or might have been contaminated.
- b. A Do Not Drink or Do Not Use Advisory can be lifted on a case by case basis in consultation with the Division of Water Supply & Geoscience.
 - c. A NJDEP issued Order, such as a Boil Water Notification Order requires NJDEP authorization prior to lifting a water use advisory
 - i. The water use advisory must remain in effect until completion of remedial measures to restore potable water service and
 - ii. Water quality results are reviewed and deemed acceptable by the Division of Water Supply & Geoscience.