

Water Safety Precautions for Owners of Transient Public Water Systems Impacted by Flooding or Loss of System Pressure

Owners of Transient Public Water Systems (e.g., churches, restaurants and convenience stores with their own water system) that have experienced flooding of the well or unusually low water pressure due to broken water lines or power loss need to assume that bacteria is present in the water system. The water system should not be used for human consumption (e.g., drinking, cooking or washing) until microbiological testing has been conducted to demonstrate the absence of coliform bacteria. If your establishment is permitted by a local health department (e.g., restaurant, limited food service establishment, caterer, hotel) check with them immediately. The local health department can provide testing services and other assistance.

Based on the potential for contamination, the owner of a transient public water systems should cease using the water for human consumption unless absolutely necessary due to emergency condition (i.e., use is necessary to sustain life). If use for human consumption is necessary, the water should be boiled until the system has been tested to verify that the operating status has returned to normal.

Boiling the water to a full rolling boil for a period of one (1) minute before use for consumption (drinking or making tea, coffee, Kool-Aid, brushing teeth, etc.) should greatly reduce the possibility of any bacteriological contamination. If you cannot boil the water, add plain household bleach (which is 4% to 6% chlorine) using $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon per gallon, shake, and let stand for 30 minutes. Water should have a slight bleach odor. If not, repeat the procedure. Because boiling water can increase nitrate levels that might be present, bottled water or stored should be used by pregnant women and be used for preparing infant formula. If possible, infants and pregnant women should not drink boiled water. If you do not have bottled water available for pregnant women and infants, it is better for them to drink boiled water than to drink water that is not boiled and may be contaminated. It is important not to become dehydrated.