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**Water Issues at Food Businesses**

**What to do if you’re concerned about the water at your food business.**

Clean water is essential when running a food business. It’s also easy to take for granted. But does your business know what to do when there are problems with your water supply?

* A **boil water advisory** means the water system has confirmed bacterial contamination.
* A **brown water advisory** means that other contaminants got into the system. This can happen when there is a break in the line or an equipment failure.

Both can make you, your staff, or your customers sick. Protecting public health, and your business, means knowing how to respond. Follow these steps to keep yourself and your customers safe:

**During a boil or brown water advisory:**

* Do not use water for dishwashing, drinking, food preparation, produce rinsing, or handwashing.
* Contact Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department for assistance.
* You must close immediately. Stop all food and beverage preparation.
* Turn off all ice machines, soda machines, espresso machines, and other equipment that draws water during use.

**After the advisory is lifted:**

* Run all faucets at least 5-10 minutes, or until the water runs clear.
* Discard all ice in the ice machine.
* Make another batch of ice and discard.
* Drain and refill the dishwasher.
* Flush all lines that carry water – including soda fountains, espresso machines, and filtration systems.

**Before reopening:**

* Verify the water runs clear from all faucets.
* If closed by the Health Department, you must get approval from our Food and Community Safety Program to reopen.

**We are here to help.**

The Health Department will coordinate with your water utility to determine when the water is safe again. We are also available to answer questions or provide technical assistance.

**Contact our Food Safety team**: [food@tpchd.org](mailto:mailto:food@tpchd.org)

We also created an [infographic that you can print](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Boil-Brown-Water-Advisories-in-Food-Establishments.pdf) and post in your office. It has all the information you need to respond to a boil or brown water advisory.