

Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner  
Boil Water Questions and Answers

1. When is it safe to cook, wash, drink and clean with the water?  
*After the boil water advisory has been lifted. You can wash and clean with the water under a boil water notice (see #2 below) without boiling it first.*
2. Is it safe to shower under a boil water advisory?  
*Yes, unless you have an open wound, etc... that could let bacteria into your body.*
3. Is it safe to brush your teeth under a boil water advisory?  
*You should use boiled or bottled water.*
4. Is it safe to wash the dishes in a dishwasher or by hand under boil water advisory?  
*Use heat dry in the dishwasher - pour hot boiled water over hand washed.*
5. How long should I boil the water?  
*The water should reach a rolling boil and boil for 5 minutes.*
6. Do I have to let it stand after I boil the water, why?  
*You should let it stand for about 15 minutes to minimize the chance of burning yourself.*
7. Why is the water milky or discolored? What should I do to get rid of the discoloring? Is it safe to use this water?  
*If the water is milky/cloudy color and clears in a few minutes when put it in a glass (from the bottom up), then it is air in the water and is safe to drink. You can help by flushing your lines, starting with the outside hose bibb closest to where the service line enters your home. Flush outside about 15 minutes, then flush your inside faucets, etc... for a few minutes each.*
8. Community Wells (water milky or discolored) - what should I do to get rid of the discoloring? Is it safe to use this water (cook, wash, drink, etc...)?  
*For cloudy/milky color, see #7. If the water is yellow, orange, red or brown, it may be due to iron in the well water. Iron is not a health concern in well water but the discoloration is a nuisance problem. If you have a softener or filter, bypass it and then check the color. If it is clear, then you should follow equipment maintenance requirements (check your salt level and regenerate your softener, clean or replace filter, etc...). If the bypassed water is discolored, it may be due to increased velocity in the water mains (lots of water sprinkling, running a lot of water in the home by clothes washing/dish washing/showering at the same time or system fire hydrant use). Check and flush your outside hose bibb, closest to where the service line enters your home, to try and clear water color. If a hydrant was used it may take a day to settle down. You can contact the Water Maintenance Department to schedule a low-pressure service line flush at 248-356-6299 if the discoloring persists.*
9. When trying to flush my water lines, does it matter if I'm running the inside taps or the outside? Should I drain my hot water heater?  
*See #7 for flushing. You do not need to drain your hot water heater for a "precautionary boil water advisory" as you shouldn't drink or cook with water drawn from your hot water tap. Our office does recommend that you flush your hot water tank annually and clean your faucet aerators semi-annually as a routine maintenance issue. A faucet aerator is the screen that screws into the end of the faucet.*
10. What can be done when there is air in the water lines?  
*See #7.*
11. Are there any precautions I should take when I have low water pressure?  
*No, but you may want to store some water just in case you lose all water pressure.*