



# 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 consumption.

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

## What is meant by “consuming” tap water?

“Consuming” means to drink tap water or use it to brush teeth; wash fruits, vegetables or other foods; or make ice. If a PBWN is issued, any tap water used for these purposes should be disinfected according to the guidelines below.

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

The water produced by the City is also purchased by other municipalities. These municipalities include Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Oakland Park, Port Everglades, Village of Sea Ranch Lakes, Wilton Manors, and sections of Davie and Tamarac (east of State Road 7/441). As a result, a PBWN issued by the City may also apply to citizens in some or all of these municipalities.

## Why would the City issue a PBWN?

A PBWN may be issued as a precaution to protect public health if the City’s water system loses power and/or positive water pressure, or if power is temporarily interrupted. This would most likely occur during a hurricane, tropical storm, or other unforeseen weather event or emergency.

## 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 repairs 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 consumption to kill any impurities that may have

entered the water, or to 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 use commercially bottled water for consumption and food preparation.

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

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

#### Clear tap water

- If the water coming out of the tap is not cloudy, put eight drops (which is about 1/8 teaspoon) of **unscented** common household bleach that has 5 to 6 percent active ingredients into one gallon of tap water. A food grade container should be used.
- Shake the container to mix the water.
- Allow the water to stand for 30 minutes before consuming the water. The water may have a chlorine odor or taste.

#### Cloudy tap water

- If the water coming out of the tap is cloudy, put 16 drops (which is about 1/4 teaspoon) of **unscented** common household bleach that has 5 to 6 percent active ingredients into one gallon of tap water. A food grade container should be used.
- Shake the container to mix the water.
- Allow the water to stand for 30 minutes before consuming the water. The water may have a chlorine odor or taste.

*Note: Using bleach to disinfect tap water will not kill parasites that may be present; however, boiling the water will kill the parasites.*

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

### 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 baths 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 for them 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. As an extra precaution, you may add one tablespoon of **unscented** common household bleach to each gallon of dishwater used. Rinse dishes with boiled water.

### **What can business and other non-residential property 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 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 on the City's website at [www.fortlauderdale.gov](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov) and citizens may also contact the 24-hour Customer Service Center at 954.828.8000 for information. Fort Lauderdale residents may also sign up for CodeRED™ to receive emergency telephone notifications from the City. To sign up for CodeRED, please visit [www.fortlauderdale.gov](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov) or call 954.828.8000.

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

Yes, after the PBWN is lifted you should flush your household pipes, water fountains, etc. prior to drinking or cooking with tap 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 the pipes.

Please dispose of any ice made during the PBWN. If you have an automatic ice maker, allow the ice maker to make three batches of ice and then discard that ice. Ice made before the PBWN was issued is okay to consume. However, if in doubt, discard the ice and make a new batch.

### **Who may I contact for additional information about PBWNs?**

You may contact the City of Fort Lauderdale's 24-hour Customer Service Center at 954.828.8000 or online at [www.fortlauderdale.gov/customerservice](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/customerservice). You may also contact the Broward County Health Department at 954.467.4700, ext. 4231.

### **How can I learn more about Fort Lauderdale's drinking water?**

For more information about the City of Fort Lauderdale's drinking water, please visit [www.fortlauderdale.gov/wqr](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/wqr) and read the most recent annual Water Quality Report.