

Madison County Health Department

Environmental Health Division

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Operating Guidelines for Retail Food Service Establishments in the Event of a Boil Water Order or Interrupted Water Service

To continue operating under “boil water” orders or interrupted water service from municipal water supplies, all retail food service establishments (restaurants) must secure and use potable water from an approved source (e.g., from tank trucks or bottled potable water) for all water usage. This includes for the following uses:

- 1.) Coffee, tea, other beverages made in the food establishment
- 2.) Ice
- 3.) Washing produce or thawing frozen foods
- 4.) Employees hand washing
- 5.) Washing all dishes and cooking utensils
- 6.) All water used in 3-compartment sinks
- 7.) All water for sanitizing solutions

It must be noted that equipment plumbed directly into the water system such as direct feed coffee urns, ice machines that manufacture ice on site, and post-mix soda or beverage machines may not be used during the boil order.

If it is not possible to obtain potable water from tank trucks or bottled potable water and if a heat source is available, boil the water vigorously for five minutes.

Retail food establishments may consider the following alternative procedures to minimize water usage:

- 1.) Commercially-packaged ice may be substituted for ice made on-site
- 2.) Single-service items or disposable utensils may be substituted for reusable dishes and utensils
- 3.) Pre-prepared foods from approved sources may be used in place of complex preparations on-site
- 4.) Restrict menu choices or hours of operation
- 5.) Portable toilets may be made available for sanitary purposes

After “boil water” order is lifted or water service resumes, these precautionary measures must be followed:

- 1.) Run all water lines for one minute to flush contaminated water from system. This includes each fill point for post-mix soda and beverage machines.
- 2.) Clean and sanitize all fixtures, sinks and equipment connected to water lines
- 3.) Run your dishwasher empty through three complete cycles to flush the water lines and assure that the dishwasher is cleaned internally before washing equipment and utensils in it.
- 4.) Discard all ice in ice machines; clean and sanitize (1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of potable water) the interior surfaces; run the ice through 3 cycles; and discard ice with each cycle.
- 5.) Replace all ice machine filters and beverage dispenser filters and flush all water lines for 10 to 15 minutes.