

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Environmental Protection Division

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Reply to: Drinking Water Program (404) 656-2750

Guidance to Georgia Public Drinking Water Systems on Public Advisories for Boil Water Notices for Service Delivery Interruptions

Public Drinking Water Systems in Georgia are responsible for protecting public health by providing safe drinking water. Despite best efforts, public utilities and other water suppliers are sometimes unable to prevent interruptions in water service. When an interruption of water service occurs, public water providers should inform the affected customers to take precautionary measures for boiling water they will drink or use for making ice or preparing food. This guidance document provides assistance to water systems for issuing public advisories to ensure that water utility customers can take precautionary measures to protect their health.

Conditions that could warrant issuance of a Public Advisory

- Failure to maintain, under Georgia Rules for Safe Drinking Water Chapter 391-3-5-.10:
 - (1) The water distribution system must be designed and the water lines sufficiently sized to furnish at all times the instantaneous demand flow of water required and to maintain at all times a pressure of twenty (20) pounds per square inch at each service connection in the distribution system under all conditions of flow.
 - (4) It is the responsibility of the supplier of water to maintain the distribution system to prevent contamination of the drinking water and to provide the required pressure and flow at all times.
 - (12) Public water distribution network and its related components must be protected to prevent unauthorized tampering.
- Failure to perform, under Georgia Rules for Safe Drinking Water Chapter 391-3-5-.12:
 - All newly constructed public water systems including extensions, additions, modifications, or repairs to existing public water systems including water mains, storage tanks, treatment plants, wells, or any other pipes or parts of the public water system which may affect the quality of the drinking water which is delivered, treated or stored, must be disinfected before being placed into service by the supplier
- Failure to maintain, under Georgia Rules for Safe Drinking Water Chapter 391-3-5-.14:
 - The supplier of water must continuously chlorinate the water to maintain a detectable residual of free chlorine in all parts of the distribution system in the recommended amount of at least 0.2 parts per million, and such additional amounts as may be determined necessary by the Division, unless other means of disinfection have been approved by the Director. If the residual disinfectant concentration is measured by approved analytical methods and not detected, the supplier may, upon approval by the Division, determine and report detectability by the use of heterotrophic plate count measurements as required by 40 CFR § 141.72 (1989) and other applicable paragraphs of 40 CFR Part 141.
- Legal basis: OCGA § 12-5-182. Powers of director as to protection of public from contaminants presenting imminent and substantial danger
 - The director, upon receipt of information that a contaminant is present in or is likely to enter a public water system and that such contaminant may present imminent and substantial danger to the public health, may take such authorized action as he may deem necessary in order to protect the public health.

Protocol

1. Upon discovery of compromised water distribution system (from, for example, main breaks, low pressure events, water outages, disinfection problems, or tampering), perform an initial assessment to include location, service area affected, proximate source of problem, and remediation needed.
2. Contact the assigned Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (EPD) Drinking Water Program inspector or engineer. Nights and weekends, contact the Georgia State Emergency Operations Center at (404) 635-7200. Contact the county health department to apprise of the situation. Discuss the situation with an EPD Drinking Water representative for actions to be undertaken.
3. Issue a public advisory targeted to the customers affected. An example is included as a template.

Example Template
Public Advisory

BOIL WATER NOTICE

[Indicate the cause for the service interruption in the system here (e.g., *The isolation of a large diameter water main for repair*)] is causing water pressure in parts of the water system to drop to dangerously low levels. When this occurs a potential health hazard may exist in these areas of zero pressure from backflow and/or back-siphonage of water of unknown quality into the water distribution system.

In order to protect the public from a potential health hazard, all citizens that have experienced water outages and/or low water pressures are advised to “boil” all water prior to use for drinking, cooking, or preparing baby food. The water should be boiled for at least one minute after reaching a rolling boil. Citizens should continue to boil their water until they are notified by their drinking water utility that the water system has been restored to full operation, and that the microbiological quality of the water in the distribution system is safe for human consumption.

[Indicate the name of Public Water System and a contact telephone number for questions.]

Notes:

1. The Drinking Water Program of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has issued this public advisory. Please take the necessary steps to issue this notice through one or more methods: by radio & television announcements, by newspaper, by reverse-911 calls, by computer-based message switching system, or through hand delivery of printed boil water notices. Make sure that all your water customers have been notified of this public advisory.
2. The boil water notice must remain in effect until acceptable corrective measures are taken to ensure pressure has been restored to the affected areas and the water quality in these areas has been demonstrated to be microbiologically safe to drink. When these conditions have been met, please contact the EPD's Drinking Water Program and notify them of acceptable conditions for rescinding the boil water notice (copies of the laboratory reports must be sent to EPD, along with a copy of the boil water notice).

PROCEDURES FOR REMOVING A BOIL WATER NOTICE

The following items must be accomplished before a boil water notice will be removed by EPD:

- A. Distribution system integrity must be restored by repairing and/or isolating all main breaks. Pipes should be flushed until the water is clear. Adequate water should be pumped into the distribution system to pressurize all areas and build adequate reserve in the storage tanks. Free chlorine residual measurements and coliform bacteria samples must be collected from enough sites to adequately represent all areas of the distribution system (EPD recommends using at least 50% of the water system's existing coliform sample site locations and/or collecting at least 15-20 samples). Free chlorine residuals must be detected throughout the distribution system and all microbiological tests (performed by a certified laboratory) must be negative for total coliform bacteria. A copy of the laboratory results must be sent to EPD.
- B. Based upon the laboratory results, EPD will decide whether to rescind the boil water notice.