



After a flood, what the public should know about...

Drinking water

How do I know whether my house is served by a water system that has issued a boil water advisory?

Officials will inform the public by TV, radio, and newspaper. Some water systems or local governments may use reverse-911 to alert residents by phone. Some water systems or towns may also post information on their website or deploy vehicles with loudspeakers.

What should I do if a boil water advisory has been issued?

If a boil water advisory has been issued, the water coming into your house (tap water), may be unsafe to drink. Heat and hold the water at a rolling boil for 1 minute. Then let it cool. Water can be stored in the refrigerator if there is electricity. Drinking and cooking with boiled water is safe for humans and pets.

Ice cubes prepared before the start of the boil water advisory can be used. Ice cubes made afterward must be thrown away. Dishwashing machines can be used if the final rinse is 113° F for 20 minutes, 122 ° F for 5 minutes or 160° F for 1 minute. Check the dishwasher manual for details on heat cycles.

What should I do if a boil water advisory has been issued?

If a boil water advisory has been issued, the tap water coming into your house, the tap water, may be unsafe to drink. Heat and hold the water at a rolling boil for 1 minute, then let it cool. Drink and cook with boiled or bottled water. Drinking and cooking with boiled water is safe for humans and pets.

It is OK to bathe in tap water?

It's safe to bathe in tap water. Children and the disabled should be supervised. Everyone should avoid getting tap water in their mouth or eyes. It is recommended to use boiled water to brush your teeth.

How will I know that it is safe to drink tap water?

Officials will inform the public when the tap water is safe to drink. Local officials will test the water to know for certain when it is safe to drink. Continue to use boiled water until the tests show the tap water is safe. When the advisory is lifted, flush your water taps for 2-3 minutes. Empty and clean your automatic ice makers and water chillers. Drain and refill your hot water heater if set at a low temperature (below 113°F).

My home was flooded and I am worried about the safety of the drinking water. What should I do?

Use bottled water that has not been exposed to flood water, if available. If you don't have bottled water, you should boil tap water to make sure it is safe. Boiling water will kill most types of disease causing germs. Bring the tap water to a rolling boil for one minute. Let it cool and store it in clean containers with covers/lids. If the water is cloudy, filter it through a clean cloth or allow it to settle and use the clear water from the top of the container.

I don't have any electric/power and can't boil water. Any other suggestions?

Use bottled water, if possible. If you can't boil water, you can disinfect it using household bleach. Bleach will kill some, but not all, types of disease-causing organisms that may be in the water. If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle, and use the clear water from the top of the container. Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of regular, unscented, liquid household bleach per each gallon of water. Stir it well and let it stand for at least 30 minutes before you use it. Store disinfected water in clean containers with covers/lids.

Should I be concerned about the safety of my water?

Hurricanes and flooding can contaminate the public water supply. Water may not be safe to drink. Pay attention to the radio, TV, or other news outlets for information on your local water supply. Announcements should give you updated information and let you know if you need to boil your water to make it safe to drink. Otherwise, use bottled water until your tap water is safe to use and drink.

I have a well. Is it safe to drink the water?

If you have a private well and it was covered by flood water, flush the well until the water is clear and free of sediment, then test the well for bacteria; do not drink the water until it's been tested. It is best to sample the water before it reaches the water storage tank. If bacteria are found, the well must be disinfected. You can disinfect using unscented bleach. The well should be inspected during the disinfection. Directions may be found at: <http://www.ni.gov/dep/watersupply/disinfectionofprivatewells.pdf>

How do I flush a well?

To flush a well: Attach a hose to an outside spigot. Open the spigot. Let the water run until it is clear and free of dirt and sediment.

Can I use a home water filter if I don't have bottled water or in place of boiling water?

Most home water filters do not provide adequate protection when a boil water advisory is issued. Activated carbon filters do not remove microorganisms. At this time, there is no boil water advisory.

What steps should I take to make sure my tap water is safe after a boil water advisory is lifted?

There are steps you can take after a boil water advisory has been lifted to make sure that your tap water is safe. Run your water faucets for 2- 3 minutes. Empty and clean your automatic ice makers and water chillers. Drain and refill your hot water heater if set at a low temperature (below 113°F). And if you have a water softener, run it through a regeneration cycle.

Bleach dilution**How do you make a diluted bleach solution?**

This depends how you will use the mixture/solution. See the chart below.

Use	Bleach (unscented liquid chlorine)	Water
To drink	1/8 teaspoon or 8 drops	1 gallon
To rinse plates/dishes	1 tablespoon	1 gallon
To clean hard household surfaces (countertops, food cans, toys, flatware, tools, etc.)	1 cup	1 gallon
To kill mold	1 cup	1 gallon
To clean pool surfaces	1 cup	5 gallons

For more information

- Your local health department <http://ni.gov/health/lh/directory/lhdselectcounty.shtml>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) www.fema.gov (800) 621.3362
- New Jersey Dept. of Health , Food and Drug Safety Program
www.ni.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety/index.shtml
- New Jersey Office of Emergency Management <http://www.ready.nj.gov>