

What's the difference between a Boil Order and a Boil Advisory?

A boil advisory is to a tornado watch as a boil order is to a tornado warning.

A tornado watch is issued to alert people to the possibility of a tornado development in your area. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado has actually been sighted or is indicated by radar.

So, What is a Boil Order?

A boil order is issued by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to public water systems when a threat to the public health exists, or is likely to exist, that boiling the water will remedy. The public water system is then required to notify consumers as soon as possible, and by the most effective methods, that need to boil their drinking water.

What is a Boil Advisory?

A public water system may issue a boil advisory when there is concern a problem with drinking water may exist, but it has not yet been confirmed. This may be done, for example, while waiting for results of confirmation samples collected for bacteriological analysis, which can take up to two days plus the time required to transport samples to the laboratory.

What precautions should I take if under a boil order or a boil advisory?

The following steps need to be taken:

1. Boil water vigorously for three minutes prior to use. Use only water that has been boiled for drinking, diluting fruit juices, all other food preparation and brushing teeth.
2. Dispose of ice cubes and do not use ice from a household automatic ice maker. Remake ice cubes with water that has been boiled.
3. Disinfect dishes and other food contact surfaces by immersion for at least one minute in clean tap water that contains one teaspoon of unscented household bleach per gallon of water.

Note: Let water cool sufficiently before drinking (approximately 110 degrees F).

Do I need to boil bath water?

Water used for bathing does not generally need to be boiled. Supervision of children is necessary while bathing or using backyard pools so water is not ingested. Persons with cuts or severe rashes may wish to consult their physicians.

What are the causes of boil orders?

The presence of E. coli bacteria is a common cause for issuing a boil order. Other instances include low water pressure and inadequate levels of chlorine at systems that require chlorination. High turbidity levels, cross connections, inadequate treatment techniques and the presence of other microbial pathogens such as Giardia or Cryptosporidium are potential causes for boil orders that occur less frequently.