

# Frequently Asked Questions from Customers Under a Boil Order

## **Why does the City of Van Alstyne issue boil water notices?**

The City of Van Alstyne will issue a boil water notice, even if there is a very unlikely possibility of drinking water contamination, as a precaution to protect customers. State laws require that a Boil Water Notice is issued if a water system has (or could have) become contaminated from a water line break or loss of system pressure.

## **What is a boil water notice?**

A boil water notice is a public statement advising people to boil their tap water before using it, typically in response to an event that has (or could have) introduced contaminants into the water distribution system. Such events include a large water main break, widespread loss of system pressure, or results of routine sample testing in the system. Although waterborne diseases are extremely rare, they can be serious. The risk is higher for infants, the elderly and persons with immune deficiency disorders. The City of Van Alstyne issues boil-water notices even if the possibility of contamination is remote to safeguard the health of the community.

## **Why is the boil water notice important?**

Contaminated water may contain harmful bacteria, viruses, and parasites which can cause symptoms such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, elderly and people with severely compromised immune systems.

## **What do I need to do to make sure my water is safe to drink and use?**

You should boil tap water vigorously for at least two minutes prior to using it for drinking or cooking (the minute starts when the water begins to bubble). This includes water used for brushing teeth, making ice, washing raw foods, preparation of drinks and water for pets. Wait for the water to cool before using it or store it in the refrigerator in a clean container. Boiling removes harmful bacteria in the water that may cause illness. You should throw away ice made during the time the advisory or notice was issued, as freezing does not kill bacteria.

## **Is the water safe for washing dishes, laundry, and bathing?**

The water is safe for washing dishes, but you should use hot, soapy water (you may add one tablespoon of bleach per gallon as a precaution) and rinse dishes in boiled water. There are no restrictions on doing laundry. The water is also safe for bathing during an advisory or notice but you must be careful not to swallow it. Use extra caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath instead. If the water is contaminated by a chemical that will cause harm on contact, the City of Van Alstyne will issue a Do Not Use Notice, meaning the water should not be used for bathing.

## **How do I prepare food and baby formula?**

Use boiled or bottled water only for drinking, cooking, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables, brushing teeth, making baby formula, bathing and cleaning. Breast feed your baby or use ready-made formula. If you must use water to make formula, use bottled water. If you don't have bottled water, use water that has been rapidly boiled for at least two (2) minutes.

## **Is it safe to brush my teeth?**

Only brush teeth with boiled or bottled water. Do not use untreated tap water.

## **What about my pets?**

You should follow the same boiling water procedures for your pet as you would for yourself.

## **How long will the need to boil water continue?**

Customers should not stop boiling water until they receive notice from the City of Van Alstyne. Public notification will be given when a boil water notice or order is lifted. Typically, the need to boil water lasts for 24 to 48 hours but can be longer and may last for several days or more. How long will depend on the conditions that caused the need to boil, how quickly the conditions are corrected, and how long it takes for laboratory results

to confirm it is safe to return to normal water use. The City of Van Alstyne will work to provide updates on the progress of corrective actions and how long the event is expected to last.

**What do I need to do when the notice has been lifted?**

When it is no longer necessary to boil the water, the water system officials will notify you that the water is safe for consumption. Instructions to discontinue boiling will be issued in the same manner as the notice. After an advisory or notice has been lifted (if water contamination did occur), you should flush household pipes, ice makers, water fountains, etc. prior to using for drinking or cooking. Flushing simply means letting the water run to ensure that no contaminated water remains in your pipes. Follow the following guidelines for flushing:

- Run all cold-water faucets in your home for one minute
- To flush automatic ice makers, make three batches of ice and discard
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle