



Whitman County Environmental Health Department
1205 SE Pro Mall Blvd. Ste 203
Pullman, WA. 99163
Phone: (509) 332-6752 Fax: (509) 334-4517
eh@whitmancounty.net
www.WhitmanCounty.org/EnvironmentalHealth

What to Do After a Boil Water Order

Residents are advised to "flush" their water following the lifting of a boil order in order to clear plumbing of potentially contaminated water. Flushing your household and building water lines includes interior and exterior faucets; showers; water and ice dispensers; water treatment units, etc. guidance. Please follow the specific requirements outlined by the equipment manufacturer.

Cold Water Faucets: Run tap water until the water feels cold, three minutes or more, before drinking tooth-brushing, or using for food preparation. *If you have a single-lever faucet, set it to run the cold water first, and then allow an additional three minutes for the "hot" side.*

Hot Water Faucets: To clear hot-water pipes and water heater of untreated water, change all faucets to hot water and flush for a minimum of 15 minutes for a typical household 40-gallon hot-water tank, 30 minutes for an 80-gallon hot water tank or larger. Hot water is then safe to use for washing hands, and for hand-washing of dishes, pots and pans, etc. Never use water from the "hot" faucet for drinking, cooking, or other internal-consumption purposes.

Dishwashers: After flushing hot water pipes and water heater, run dishwasher empty one time.

Humidifiers: Discard any water used in humidifiers, Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), oral, medical or health care devices, and rinse the device with clean water.

Food and baby formula: Discard baby formula and other foods prepared with water on the day or days of the boil order. (If unsure of the dates contact your water department.)

Refrigerator water-dispensing machine: Water dispensers from refrigerators should be flushed by at least one quart of water. If unsure of your dispenser's capacity, refer to manufacturer specifications.

Ice cubes: Automatic ice dispensers should be emptied of ice made during the boil order and run through a 24-hour cycle, discarding the ice to assure purging of the icemaker water supply line. This could be as much as five (5) complete batches. Ice trays should be washed and sanitized before reuse.

Water Softners: Run through a complete regeneration cycle. Follow the instructions from the appliance manufacturer.

Due to the flushing of the lines by residents and the flushing of the hydrants by the city, some customers may experience a lack of water pressure and/or discolored water. However, this is an expected result and does not pose an immediate health risk. Contact the water department or City Hall if you have any questions.

Frequently Asked Questions

When I turn on the faucet, the water sputters. Why?

You have air in your lines. Turn on your tap slowly and run the water until the sputtering stops.

The water is discolored. What should I do?

Flush water pipes by running the water until it is clear.

Do not wash clothes if the water is discolored. Wait until the water runs clear at the tap. Wash a load of dark clothes first.

Why does my water have a strong smell?

The smell is probably chlorine. Often, water systems will increase chlorine levels to disinfect the pipes.

What should I do if my water pressure is low?

Check the faucet screens for trapped particles. Remove the screens and clean out any particles. Put the screens back on the faucet.

Do I need to clean out my faucets?

Yes. You should flush your faucets after the drinking water advisory.

- Turn on the main water valve.
- Turn on the cold water tap at all faucets and run the water until you feel a change in temperature (i.e. the water gets noticeably colder). This may take several minutes. Begin with the faucet that is highest up in your home or building and then open the other faucets one at a time moving from the highest floor to the lowest.

Do I need to clean appliances?

Yes. Read the owner's manual for directions to clean appliances such as water softeners and filter units.

My refrigerator has a water dispenser/ice maker. Do I need to clean them?

Yes. Water dispensers and ice makers are connected to your water line. You need to flush and clean them.

Follow the directions in the owner's manual or:

- Change the filter cartridges.
- Throw out ice.
- Flush the water dispenser for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Run the ice maker for 1 hour.
- Throw out all the ice.
- Wash and sanitize bin areas.

Do I need to do something for the water softener?

Yes. You may need to run through a regeneration cycle. Follow the directions in the owner's manual.

I have a water treatment unit for the house. Does it need special care?

Yes. Change the filter cartridges. Some units need disinfecting. Follow the directions in the unit's owner's manual.