18. Water Restriction

Preparing for outage

Water Containers (Cleaning and Storage):
• Unopened commercially bottled water is the safest and most reliable emergency water supply

• Use of food-grade water storage containers, such as those found at camping supply stores, are recommended if you are preparing stored water yourself

Avoid using the following containers to store safe water:

• Containers that cannot be sealed tightly

• Containers that can break, such as glass bottles

• Containers that have ever been used for any toxic solid or liquid chemicals (e.g. old bleach containers)

• Plastic or cardboard bottles, jugs, and containers used for milk or fruit juices.

Before filling with safe water, use these steps to clean and sanitize storage containers:

1. Wash the storage container with dishwashing soap and water and rinse completely with clean water

2. Sanitize the container by adding a solution made by mixing 1 teaspoon of unscented liquid household chlorine bleach in one quart of water

3. Cover the container and shake it well so that the sanitizing bleach solution touches all inside surfaces of the container

4. Wait at least 30 seconds and then pour the sanitizing solution out of the container

5. Let the empty sanitized container air dry before use OR rinse the empty container with clean, safe water that already is available.

For proper water storage:

• Label container as "drinking water" and include storage date

• Replace stored water that is not commercially bottled every six months

• Keep stored water in a place with a fairly constant cool temperature

• Do not store water containers in direct sunlight

• Do not store water containers in areas where toxic substances, such as gasoline or pesticides, are present.

When Outage Happens

Water for oral consumption

Use only water that has been properly disinfected for drinking, cooking, making any prepared drink or brushing teeth.

1. Best option: If there is no bottled water, boil water to make it safe. Boiling water will kill most types of disease causing organisms that may be in the water. If the water is cloudy, filter it through a clean cloth and allow water to settle, and draw off the clear water for disinfection. Boil the water for one minute, let it cool and store it in clean containers with covers.

2. Secondary option: If boiling water cannot be done, 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 a clean cloth and allow it to settle, and draw off the clear water for disinfection.

Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of regular, unscented, liquid household bleach for each gallon of water, stir it well and let it stand for 30 minutes before using it. Store disinfected water in clean containers with covers.

Water for cleaning

If there is insufficient quantity of water to clean, use pop up wipes (Caviwipes) to sanitize surfaces.

If there is water but it is of unknown the quality, it can be boiled for one minute. If this cannot be done then bleach the water.

Bleaching water for cleaning:

• Add 10 drops per quart or litre of filtered and settled water.

• Double the amount of bleach for cloudy, murky or coloured water or water that is extremely cold.

Hand Sanitization When Clean, Running Water is Not Available

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of microbes on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of microbes on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs.

Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy. If clean water is not available, use sanitary hand wipes to remove any visible soiling and then use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.

When Water Restriction Ends

Pipes in the facility may need to be flushed after the boil water advisory has been lifted to ensure that the water that has been sitting in the pipes has been purged and treated water is again available at the tap.

Ask your Environmental Health Officer for advice on this issue.

Sources of information:

1. Health Canada Boil Water Advisories

2. EPA Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water

3. Water Related Emergencies & Outbreaks