

# DRINKING WATER WARNING

## Wilmington water is contaminated with *E. coli*

### BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING

Total coliform bacteria were found in a routine sample from the Hillside Storage Tank, collected on Tuesday, September 6. This required 3 follow-up samples to be collected at the tank and its immediate vicinity, which were collected on September 7. On September 8, we were notified that *E. coli* bacteria were found in 1 of these 3 samples. *E. coli* bacteria can make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune systems.

#### What should I do? What does this mean?

- **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST or USE BOTTLED WATER**

Bring all water to a rolling boil and let it **boil for at least one (1) minute or use bottled water**. You may cool the boiled water before using. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, food preparation, brushing teeth and washing dishes **until further notice**. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.

- Refer to the attached notice for additional precautions you may take. This information, including **Consumer Information on Boil Orders and Boil Order Frequently Asked Questions** is also located on the MassDEP website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/consumer-information-on-boil-orders>
- **Discard** all ice, beverages, uncooked foods, and formula made with tap water collected on or after **Wednesday, September 7, 2022**.
- **Food establishments** must follow MA DPH procedures and the direction of their local board of health, which may be more stringent than the DPH guide. **MA Department of Public Health - Guidance for Emergency Action Planning for Retail Food Establishments (pg. 30)** <http://www.foodprotect.org/guides-documents/emergency-action-plan-for-retail-food-establishment/>
- *Fecal coliforms and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.*
- The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

#### What is being done?

The Town of Wilmington, with the assistance of the MWRA, is resampling the sites. We will inform you when tests show no bacteria and you no longer need to boil your water. We anticipate resolving the problem within a few days.

For more information, please contact the Wilmington Department of Public Works at 978-658-4481 or [dpw@wilmingtonma.gov](mailto:dpw@wilmingtonma.gov). General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

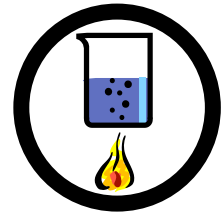
*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

This notice is being sent to you by the Wilmington Water & Sewer Division. PWS ID#: 3342000  
Date distributed: September 8, 2022



## Drinking Water Contaminated with Bacteria

Recent tests have indicated the presence of bacteria in your drinking water. The following are precautions you can take:



### Drinking the Water

There are two simple and effective methods you can use to treat drinking water for microbiological contaminants (bacteria):

**1. Boiling:** Bring the water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute. Laboratory data show this is adequate to make the water safe for drinking. You may cool the water before using it.

or

**2. Disinfecting:** Disinfectant tablets obtained from a wilderness store or pharmacy may be used. In an emergency, liquid chlorine bleach such as Clorox<sup>®</sup> or Purex<sup>®</sup> can be used at a dose of 8 drops (or 1 teaspoon) of bleach to each gallon of water. (*Careful measurement with a clean dropper or other accurate measuring device is required when using liquid chlorine bleach.*) Let stand for at least 30 minutes before use. Read the label to see that the bleach has 5-6% available chlorine.

### Washing Dishes

It is best to use disposable tableware during the time the water needs disinfection. If that is not possible, the following steps should be taken:

1. Wash dishes normally but be sure to rinse them in a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach, as mentioned above, in a gallon of warm water (submersion in a dishpan for a minimum of 5 minutes is advised). The dishes should be allowed to air dry. Gloves should be worn when handling bleach to minimize any skin irritation.
2. Because of the many variables involved with dishes washed in a dishwasher, it is recommended that you use the additional rinse step, as described above, after washing.

**Bathing:** Young children should be given sponge baths rather than put in a bathtub where they might ingest the tap water. Adults or children should take care not to swallow water when showering.

**Brushing your teeth:** Only disinfected *or* boiled water should be used for brushing your teeth.

**Ice:** Ice cubes are not safe unless made with disinfected *or* boiled water. The freezing process does not kill the bacteria or other microorganisms.

**Washing fruit and vegetables:** Use only disinfected *or* boiled water to wash fruits or vegetables that are to be eaten raw.

**Hand washing:** Only boiled *or* disinfected water should be used for hand washing.

**Cooking:** Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute before adding food.

**Infants:** For infants use only prepared canned baby formula that is not condensed and does not require added water. *Do not* use powdered formulas prepared with contaminated water.

**Houseplants and garden:** Water can be used without treatment for watering household plants and garden plants. The exception would be things like strawberries or tomatoes where the water would contact the edible fruit.

**House pets:** The same precautions that are taken to protect humans should be applied to pets. Aquatic organisms (e.g. fish) should not be exposed to water containing elevated levels of bacteria. If the organism's water needs to be refreshed use appropriately boiled or bottled water.