



## Precautionary Boil Water Notices Protect Our Customers

### [Goto Mandatory Boil Water Notice Guidelines](#)

You may have heard about or noticed a significant increase in the number of precautionary boil water notices issued by ECUA and other local water utilities in the recent past. Does this mean that the quality and safety of our water has declined? Does this mean that ECUA's water mains are breaking more so than in the past? Absolutely not! Rather, changes in regulatory rules are now requiring that water utilities in Florida issue precautionary boil water notices whenever water service to an area has been turned off, if even for a short while, or to just one home. Typically, water service can be interrupted for any number of reasons, most commonly while repairs are made to a water main following a break, or in the course of scheduled maintenance and repair work. Following tropical storms or hurricanes when many uprooted trees cause hundreds of broken water and sewer lines, water service may be shut off system-wide and so, boil water notices are often issued, until mains can be repaired and system pressures are restored.

Why is the issuance of a boil water notice required? When breaks or changes occur in water lines, if the normal pressure in the line is lost, the possibility exists for contaminants to enter that line. The odds of this happening are extremely remote, but to be extra cautious, precautionary boil water notices are placed in effect while routine bacteriological sampling is conducted. Usually, two separate sets of samples are taken (again to be extra cautious), each needing 24 hours to be considered complete. When both sets of samples come back "clean", the precautionary boil water notice is lifted. These advisories only affect water that is intended for drinking or cooking. **To properly disinfect water to use for drinking or cooking, simply bring to a rolling boil for several minutes or use 3-6 drops of regular household bleach per gallon of water. Let stand for 30 minutes in an open container before using.**

It may seem that this is an added cost in manpower, time, and materials to the utilities, and certainly a little inconvenient to those water users affected. However, we believe that these types of safeguards are in place to protect our customers, and are therefore worth the added time and cost to the ECUA. For more information on precautionary boil water notices, customers may call ECUA customer service.

### Mandatory Boil Water Notice

During and after a hurricane, the water supply to your home can possibly become contaminated and unfit to drink. To ensure your household has a safe and adequate water supply after natural disasters, take these precautions:

- Store enough drinking water for each family member and pet.
- Store in clean, non-corrosive, tightly covered containers.
- Store containers in a cool, dark location.
- Collect water in bathtubs for non-drinking uses.

If you live in an evacuation zone and plan on leaving your home until after the storm has passed, you can further protect the water supply going into your home and minimize property damage by following the guidelines shown below:

#### **How to protect your hot water heater:**

- Turn off your water at the cut-off valve.
- Switch off the electrical circuit breakers to your electric water heater.
- Contact your natural gas provider for recommendations on steps to take to secure your natural gas water heater.

### How to turn off your water:

Your water can be shut off at either the cut-off valve or at the water meter. Everyone in your home should know where these are located. The valve, which may have a wheel type handle, is normally under the water faucet outside (usually in the front of the house or by the garage door), 18 inches below the ground and 2 feet from the house, in line with your water meter. Some valves are located directly behind your meter box (usually about 6 inches away), which is typically located near the edge of your property line near the street. The valve can be operated to provide water, if available, for sanitary services only or after thorough disinfection following approved Health Department guidelines.

### How to purify water

A "Boil / Bottle Water" notice may be issued by the Health Department after a storm if the ECUA's water system has experienced pressure loss or if the water has become unsafe to drink due to contamination. If this occurs, you'll want to have a safe and adequate drinking water supply in your home until service can be restored. To do this you'll need to purify the water by using one of several methods:

#### **BOILING**

Boil vigorously for 3 to 5 minutes and let cool.

#### **HYPOCHLORITE BLEACH**

- Regular *liquid* bleach from the home laundry or grocery store will work well. **DO NOT** use a bleach that has a fragrance or scented agent, like a lemon scent.
- Read the label to find the percentage of chlorine available. It should be 5.25%.
- Add 6 drops to a gallon of water and let stand at least 30 minutes.
- If the water has a strong chlorine smell after 30 minutes, pour back and forth between two clean jugs or containers.

#### **PURIFICATION TABLETS**

You can purchase these from a drug store. Keep them with your hurricane supplies and use according to directions on the package.

### How to store purified water

- To keep drinking water safe from contamination, it should be stored in clean, non-corrosive, tightly covered containers.
- Prepare two quarts of water per day for each family member and any family pets.
- To increase shelf life of water, group bottles in dark plastic trash bags to keep light out. Store containers in a cool, dark location.
- **CAUTION:** Make sure children don't mistake bottles containing hazardous substances with bottles used for drinking water.