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Subject: Issuance of Precautionary Boil Water Notices during Hurricanes, Tropical Storms, or Other Unforeseen Emergencies for Public Water Systems

Date: July 12, 2023

Dear Water System Owner/Manager:

With the start of the 2023 hurricane season, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would like to provide you with some information regarding precautionary boil water notices (PBWNs) and DEP's emergency event tracking database. The goal of distributing this information is to ensure effective communication and consistency between DEP, DOH, the county health departments (CHDs), the impacted water system, and the water customers.

When a PBWN is issued due to an emergency, the impacted water system is required to notify its customers as soon as possible. The impacted water system must also consult with their regulatory agency (DEP District Office or Approved CHD [ACHD]) as soon as possible. Where DEP is the regulatory agency, the local CHD must also be notified. A checklist to assist in the PBWN process is enclosed. Examples of PBWN may be found at:

<https://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/drinking-water/boil-water-notice-guidance.html>

We are also providing community public water systems with a PBWN fact sheet (*Precautionary Boil Water Notice – What Should You Do?*). This fact sheet explains what your customer can expect if a PBWN has been issued and the water system's requirements to rescind it. **We encourage you to provide this fact sheet to your customers during their next billing cycle and post it to your webpage to ensure this information is readily available BEFORE an emergency.** You may also supplement it with local information that you deem important.

In addition to the PBWN checklist and fact sheet, we are also providing you with information on DEP's emergency event tracking database. DEP has transitioned from the StormTracker database to WATER Tracker, an updated and more robust emergency event tracking database. The WATER Tracker database allows facilities to update their status (fully operational, partially operational, non-operational) immediately following a storm event. The facility may also use WATER Tracker to request assistance (personnel, equipment, fuel, etc.).

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Once the impacted counties are identified following a storm event, DEP will activate the counties in the emergency event tracking database and provide notice of activation to those counties. To assist in recovery efforts and expedite response, WATER Tracker should be updated by the impacted facilities as soon as practicable.

To avoid a delay with providing emergency response assistance, it is encouraged that all utilities sign a Mutual Aid Agreement (MAA). A MAA is an agreement upon two participating utilities to abide by terms and conditions governing reimbursement for assistance provided in accordance with specific provisions. This document can be accessed from WATER Tracker within the Mutual Aid Agreement tab of the utility details page.

You can access WATER Tracker at <https://flwatertracker.com>. If you forget your log-in information or need assistance, an email and phone number is provided on the web site, or you can contact: WATERTracker@floridadep.gov.

During an emergency, it may be necessary to transport drinking water to facilities, individuals, or organizations. The drinking water supply must be safe and properly handled or additional public health problems may occur. A new Interagency Bulk Water Transport guidance document was developed and can be found at: <https://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/drinking-water/fdoh-emerg-bulk-transp-use-drink-water.pdf>

If you have any questions regarding WATER Tracker, please review Water Tracker's document library, contact your DEP district office's Drinking Water Program, or ACHD Office Drinking Water Section. The list of contacts can be found at: <https://floridadep.gov/water/source-drinking-water/content/organization-drinking-water-program>.

For questions regarding PBWNs, please contact your CHD Environmental Health Section: <https://www.floridahealth.gov/all-county-locations.html>.

Sincerely,



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Community Public Water Systems Boil Water Notice Checklist

This checklist is designed to help Community Public Water System (PWS) owners and operators comply with boil water notice (BWN) requirements found in Chapters 62-555 and 62-560, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and the Department of Health (DOH) Guidelines for the Issuance of Precautionary Boil Water Notice (PBWN).

- ☐ Notify the affected customers within 24 hours (62-560.410(1)(a)1., F.A.C.)
 - If it is a localized event, notify individual residences and establishments within the affected area via door-hangers or other means as appropriate.
 - If it is a large-scale event, call, email, or fax the PBWN to the media serving the affected area.
 - The notice must contain the following (please see the recommended PBWN template): <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/drinking-water/attacha.pdf>
 - PWS name and contact information
 - Description of the incident, including the time and date of occurrence
 - Specific geographic area affected
 - Corrective actions
 - What precautionary measures the public should take
 - Specify PBWN will be officially rescinded following receipt of satisfactory microbiological sampling
 - Any additional information required (62-560.410(5), F.A.C.)
- ☐ Contact your drinking water regulatory agency, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) District Office or Approved County Health Department (ACHD), as soon as possible, but no later than noon the next business day (62-555.350(10)(b), F.A.C.)

Regulatory Agency Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Person: _____

- ☐ Notify your local County Health Department (CHD) if your regulatory agency is the DEP District Office (62-555.335(18), F.A.C). CHD location finder:
<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/county-health-departments/find-a-county-health-department/index.html>

- ☐ Notify your county Emergency Operations Center (during a declared emergency)
- ☐ Complete corrective actions/repairs
- ☐ Unless otherwise directed by your regulatory agency, collect bacteriological samples (62-555.340(2), (3), F.A.C.) as follows:
 - For a system-wide outage, collect water samples according to your approved written microbiological sampling plan. For a community water system, this is the monthly compliance set.
 - For a smaller outage, collect (1) sample per 1,000 people affected, with a minimum of two (2), within the specific area affected.
- ☐ For water main breaks, two consecutive days of satisfactory samples is required (62-555.340(2)(a)(b), F.A.C.)
- ☐ Send a copy of lab test results to your regulatory agency; DEP or the ACHD (62-555.340(2)(c), F.A.C.), or request the lab send a copy.
- ☐ Regulatory agency approval must be received to rescind the BWN (62-555.340(5), F.A.C.)

Non-Community Public Water Systems Boil Water Notice Checklist

This checklist is designed to help Non-Community Public Water System (PWS) owners and operators comply with boil water notice (BWN) requirements found in Chapters 62-555 and 62-560, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and the Department of Health (DOH) Guidelines for the Issuance of Precautionary BWNs.

It is the water system owner's responsibility to provide public notification to its affected consumers. If your facility remains open to the public when it has a power outage or drinking water system malfunction that results in zero pressure in your plumbing; you must:

- ☐ Notify the customers that a boil water notice is in effect and tap water is **NOT** available for consumption (62-560.410(1)(a), (c), & (d), F.A.C.):
 - **Post notices in conspicuous places at accessible water and piped-water-mixed beverage outlets within your establishment.**
- ☐ Contact your drinking water regulatory agency, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) District Office or Approved County Health Department (ACHD), no later than noon the next business day (62-555.350(10)(b), F.A.C.).

Regulatory Agency Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact Person: _____

- ☐ Notify your local County Health Department (CHD) if your regulatory agency is the DEP District Office (62-555.335(18), F.A.C). CHD location finder:
<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/county-health-departments/find-a-county-health-department/index.html>
- ☐ If you prepare or process food, your regulatory food agency must also be notified of the BWN.
- ☐ Complete corrective actions to the water system, restore pressure and disinfectant residual, perform plumbing flushing, dispose of ice made during the BWN.
- ☐ Unless otherwise directed by your regulatory agency, collect bacteriological samples (62-555.340(2), (3), F.A.C.) as follows:
 - For a non-community public water system, collect two (2) water samples at locations where water is available for consumption (taps or fixtures).
 - Collect samples in a sanitary manner, then transport on ice to a DOH certified laboratory for analysis within 30 hours of collection.

- ❑ One (1) day's test of satisfactory samples is required for a pressure loss BWN (62-555.340(2)(a)(b), F.A.C.), unless a water main break occurred, then two (2) days of tests are required.
- ❑ Send a copy of lab test results to your regulatory agency; DEP or the ACHD (62-555.340(2)(c), F.A.C.), or request the lab send a copy.
- ❑ Regulatory agency approval must be received to rescind the BWN (62-555.340(5), F.A.C.).
- ❑ If this is a regulated food establishment, and continues to process food, you must also follow the instructions in **Industry Bulletin for Florida's Food Industry, Boil Water Notice Guidelines**.
Accessible via <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/drinking-water/2019-hurricane-letter-food-bulletin-bwn-guidelines.pdf>

Precautionary Boil Water Notice – What Should You Do?

[PWS Name]

[Telephone Contact Number]

[Emergency Website]

If during a hurricane, tropical storm or unforeseen emergency, our water system loses power and water pressure, we will issue a precautionary boil water notice (PBWN) to our customers.

- ☐ ***For a source PWS selling to consecutive systems, include the following: “Our water is bought and used by the following water suppliers and a boil water notice would also apply to [Purchase/Consecutive PWS name]”***

Water pressure keeps pollutants from entering the underground pipes that bring drinking water to your house or business. When the pressure is lost, contaminants can seep into the pipes. This might allow pathogens (disease-causing germs) into the water that can cause illness if one drinks it or prepares food or beverages with it. So, as a precaution, it is important to disinfect tap water to kill any bacteria or viruses that may have entered the water, or use an alternative source of water (bottled water).

- ☐ Under a boil water notice, water used for consumption can be disinfected by any one of the following methods:
- Bringing the water to a rolling boil and holding it there for one (1) minute, OR
 - Using a disinfecting chemical. If you cannot boil water, you should put eight (8) drops of common household bleach (unscented) which is about 1/8th teaspoon, into one (1) gallon of tap water, then shake it, and allow it to stand for 30 minutes before drinking. If the water is cloudy, use sixteen (16) drops, about 1/4 teaspoon of bleach instead of 8, shake it, and let it stand for 30 minutes. There should be a slight chlorine odor. Use common household bleach that has 5% to 8% active ingredients. Use food grade containers. OR
 - Using water purification tablets or iodine that many sports and camping stores sell, and follow their directions.
- ☐ You can also buy commercial bottled water for consumption and food preparation as an alternative.

Consumption includes brushing teeth, washing fruits and vegetables, and homemade ice. Tap water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, so long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water in eyes or nose or mouth. Children and disabled individuals should have their bath supervised to ensure water is not ingested. The time spent bathing should be minimized. Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who have recent surgical wounds, are immunosuppressed, or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water (that has cooled) for cleansing until the notice is lifted.

Businesses and non-residential sites should take steps such as posting notices at, or disabling water fountains and ice machines during the PBWN. If you provide water to visitors or employees, use commercially produced bottled water for drinking or beverage preparation (coffee). Food service operations have additional requirements from their regulatory agency.

After the water system is repaired, and the pressure is restored in the pipes to your home or business, the precautionary boil water notice will remain in effect for one to several days while bacteria tests are conducted to assure the safety of the water. The notice will be lifted (rescinded) only after tests prove the water is safe to drink. It may be lifted in sections of the city/county as those areas' pipes are cleared and the water deemed safe to drink. The media will be provided information updates and you should listen for this important information on the radio, television, or other media sources. Flush your taps and dispose of ice made during the PBWN.

The employees of **[PWS Name]**, your public water system, take great care in assuring that your water is safe to drink, and we appreciate your cooperation with the precautionary boil water notice to protect public health during this difficult time. Please call us at the phone number above if you have questions or concerns. The County Health Department can also assist you with answers to questions.

[DEP District Name]

[FDOH Name] in [County]

[Telephone Contact Number]