

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE AND HEALTHY**  
**RETURN**  
**WATER SAFETY**

**Safe Drinking Water**

When power goes out, water purification systems may not be functioning fully. Safe water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. Your state, local, or tribal health department can make specific recommendations for boiling or treating water in your area. Here are some general rules concerning water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene.

**Keep Drinking Water and Food Safe**

- Listen to public announcements to find out if local tap water is safe for drinking, cooking, cleaning, or bathing. Until the water is safe, use bottled water or boil or disinfect water.
- If a "boil water" advisory is in effect, do not drink tap water or use it to brush your teeth unless water has come to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute or is treated with unscented household chlorine bleach. To treat water, add 1/4 teaspoon (approximately 1.5 mL) bleach to 1 gallon of cloudy water or 1/8 teaspoon (approximately 0.75 mL) bleach to 1 gallon of clear water . Stir well and let it stand for 30 minutes before you use it.
- Do not eat food that smells bad, looks bad, or has touched floodwater. When in doubt, throw food out.

**Remember:**

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula. If possible, use baby formula that does not need to have water added. You can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands.
- If you use bottled water, be sure it came from a safe source. If you do not know that the water came from a safe source, you should boil or treat it before you use it. Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe.
- Boiling water, when practical, is the preferred way to kill harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms.
- When boiling water is not practical, you can treat water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or unscented household chlorine bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite):
  - If you use chlorine tablets or iodine tablets, follow the directions that come with the tablets.
  - If you use household chlorine bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon (~0.75 mL) of bleach per gallon of water if the water is clear. For cloudy water, add 1/4 teaspoon (~1.50 mL) of bleach per gallon. Mix the solution thoroughly and let it stand for about 30 minutes before using it.

**Note:** Treating water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or liquid bleach will not kill parasitic organisms.

September 1, 2008

Kevin U. Stephens, Sr., MD, JD

Director, New Orleans Health Department

Use a bleach solution to rinse water containers before reusing them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution. For example, fire truck storage tanks and previously used cans or bottles may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.