

BOIL WATER ADVISORY FOR INVERLOCH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1.1 When is a Boil Water Advisory declared?

A boil water advisory is declared as a precautionary measure when there is a risk that supplied drinking water is contaminated with harmful microorganisms (including bacteria, viruses and protozoa). Tap water may potentially be unsafe for consumption unless it is disinfected by rapid boiling.

1.2 Why has a Boil Water Advisory been declared on this occasion?

We have found two deceased birds and sediment in the Inverloch supply. In the interests of public safety, we're taking a very cautious approach. The presence of the birds may indicate some sort of microbiological contamination, which we are now testing. We're also immediately cleaning the system to bring it back online as soon as possible.

Cape Patterson and Wonthaggi are not affected.

1.3 What is the risk associated with drinking unboiled tap water?

There is a risk that you will contract a waterborne illness.

In many cases, symptoms may be mild and short-lived but there is also a real possibility of serious illness and long term health effects.

Do not take the risk –boil the water!

The severity and persistence of a waterborne illness will depend on the type of microorganism present, and the health and immune strength of the infected individual. The risk is greater for (but not limited to) children, the elderly, and persons with immune deficiency disorders or pre-existing illness.

1.3 How long should water be boiled?

Bring water to a rolling boil by heating it until a continuous and rapid stream of air-bubbles is produced from the bottom of a pan or kettle. Electric kettles/jugs with automatic cut-off switches are suitable for producing boiled water. Variable temperature kettles should be set to *boil*. Allow boiled water to cool before using it.

If you wish to prepare larger quantities of disinfected water and use a pot or pan for boiling water remember that **HOT WATER BURNS LIKE FIRE!** So take all usual safety precautions when boiling water on a stove top:

- Use the back burners of the stove-top;
- Ensure pot handles are turned inwards;
- Boil water in quantities that you can comfortably carry;
- Leave pots/kettles of boiled water to cool on the stove-top before attempting to decant the water into another container;
- Be extra vigilant of children.

If boiling water in a microwave, be aware of the possibility of 'superheating' and allow water to sit in the microwave for a few minutes before opening the door.

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1.4 How should boiled water be stored?

Once boiled water has cooled it should be stored in clean containers made of food-grade material. Do not use containers that have previously held non-food material such as cleaning agents or other chemicals.

The water may be stored at room-temperature provided the container has a lid or is otherwise covered. If the water is to be stored for a few days or more, place it in the fridge. Decanting the water back and forth between one clean container and another a few times should help to improve the 'flat' flavour of the water.

1.5 What should I use boiled water for?

Any water that has a chance of being ingested should be boiled:

- a) **Drinking:**
Use boiled water for drinking. This includes that used to prepare infant formula, cordial drinks, reconstituted milk powder, ice teas, etc.;
- b) **Washing Food:**
Use boiled water to wash ready-to-eat and uncooked foods such as fruit and vegetables;
- c) **Cooking:**
Use boiled water for any cooking or food preparation procedure where a rolling boil of one minute for added water may not be achieved (for example, adding extra water to a sauce or stew at the end of the cooking process. If in doubt, just use boiled water.);
- d) **Making Ice:**
Use boiled water for making ice. Switch off and clean out ice machines during a boil water advisory;
- e) **Brushing Teeth and other personal hygiene activities:**
Use boiled water for brushing teeth, cleaning dentures, gargling, shaving, and rinsing contact lenses or eyes;
- f) **Pets:**
Veterinarians recommend that drinking water for pets including dogs, cats, birds and reptiles also be boiled and then cooled. For advice on water quality required for livestock, consult your veterinarian.

1.6 Is the tap water safe for washing dishes and wiping benches?

- It is safe to use unboiled tap water for hand-washing of dishes provided detergent is used, and dishes cutlery are allowed to air-dry before use.
- It is safe to use an automatic dishwasher provided it has a hot setting for both the washing and rinsing cycles and dishes are allowed to air-dry;
- Wipe food preparation surfaces using boiled water or water that has been disinfected by adding bleach or other sanitising agents.

Note: It is important that bleach, sanitising agents and other disinfectants are made up and used according to the directions on the product label.

1.7 Is the tap water safe for washing hands?

Tap water may be used for washing hands. Use soap and then dry hands thoroughly.

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1.8 Is the tap water safe for bathing and showering?

Water is safe for bathing and showering provided there is no risk of ingestion while doing so:

- A sponge bath is recommended for infants to ensure that bath water is not swallowed. Do not allow children to suck on bath toys;
- Older children may be bathed or showered with a hand-held showerhead, avoiding the face;
- Teens and adults may shower with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed;

1.9 Is the water safe for filling wading pools for children?

No, the water is not safe for use in wading pools. Water usually gets into the mouths of small children during water play.

1.10 Is the water safe for use in the laundry?

Yes, it is safe to wash clothes, bedding and other laundry items with un-boiled tap water.

1.11 What are the alternatives to boiling water?

- Use commercially prepared bottled water;
- Fill clean, sanitised, food-grade containers at the alternative water supply tanker location listed on the boil water advisory notice.

1.12 Can I just filter the water to make it safe?

No. Typical at home filter jugs and installed filter devices do not remove all bacteria and viruses. Filtered water should also be brought to a rolling boil before drinking or using in food preparation.

1.13 Can I just use water from the hot tap for drinking and food preparation?

No. Using hot water for drinking is not recommended as the hot water service may not be set at a temperature to adequately disinfect water. Water from the hot tap is also more likely to contain metallic contaminants, particularly if the service and fittings are old.

1.14 What is being done to fix the problem?

Be assured that South Gippsland Water is taking action to restore the supply of safe drinking water to your area. Any treatment or disinfection issues are being addressed, flushing of the distribution system will be conducted and a microbiological monitoring program is in progress.

1.15 When will the water be declared safe?

The water will be declared safe once corrective actions have been completed and test results show that there are no harmful microorganisms present. Typically, two consecutive sets of sampling results indicating that the water is safe will be required. Lifting of the Boil Water Advisory will be in consultation with the Department of Health.

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1.16 How will I know when the water is safe to drink?

Tune in to local radio and television news for updates on the status of the Boil Water Advisory. Once the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted, a Discontinue Boil Water Advisory Notice will be delivered to your address. You are also invited to contact South Gippsland water Customer Service on 1300 851 636 for up-to-date information at any time.

1.17 What should I do once the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted?

- Flush all outdoor taps for a few minutes;
- Flush internal taps for 2 minutes to draw fresh water into their internal plumbing
- Drain and flush all ice-making machines in your refrigerator;
- Change any pre-treatment filters (under sink style and refrigerator water filters, carbon block, activated carbon, sediment filters, etc).

1.18 I have ingested unboiled water and developed gastro like symptoms, what should I do?

Seek the advice of your GP if you develop gastro like symptoms. Be watchful for symptoms which will typically develop from between one and ten days following ingestion of contaminated water. You are also encouraged to contact South Gippsland Water Customer Service on 1300 851 636 for further information. For more information on gastro like symptoms, refer to Better Health Channel (<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis>)

Where can I get further information?

Contact South Gippsland Water on 1300 851 636