

## Why are public notifications issued?

Notices are issued when there is a problem with drinking water, to provide the public with the information they need to make informed decisions regarding water consumption and health risks.

Your water supplier will issue a public notification when there is a potential or existing risk such as:

- A problem in the water distribution or treatment system.
- Water monitoring results show a problem with the water.
- There is evidence of disease in the community and drinking water is suspected as the source of infection

Water suppliers will inform the public once the

For additional information regarding public notification please go to:

**<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/Health+and+Safety/Drinking+Water/>**

For more information, please contact your local health unit or visit

[www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

or

[www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles](http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles)



Interior Health



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## PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

What are they  
and why are  
they issued?



## Public Notification

In BC, there are three levels of public notification which may be issued:

- 💧 Water Quality Advisory
- 💧 Boil Water Notice
- 💧 Do Not Use Water Notice

These terms are defined in the provincial Drinking Water Officer's Guide, available on the Ministry of Health website, and are used throughout BC.

## Water Quality Advisory

A **Water Quality Advisory** will be used when it is determined that there is some level of risk or uncertainty associated with water use, but the circumstances do not warrant a "Boil Water Notice" or "Do Not Use Water Notice." A Water Quality Advisory should specify the nature of the risk, steps that the water supplier is taking, and steps that water users may take to minimize their health risk.

## Boil Water Notice

A **Boil Water Notice** will be used when it is determined that there is a risk associated with water consumption, and that risk can be adequately addressed by boiling the water prior to human consumption. The notice will contain specific instruction regarding boiling requirements, and the steps that the water supplier is taking to address the risks.

## Do Not Use Water Notice

A **Do Not Use Water Notice** will be used when it is determined that there is a risk associated with water consumption, and that risk cannot be adequately addressed by boiling the water or issuing a Water Quality Advisory.

This might include higher than acceptable levels of nitrates or lead in the water, or concern that a water system may have been subject to vandalism, accidents, chemical spills, or natural events such as mudslides or floods. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the notice to specify the types of water use that are acceptable (i.e. okay to shower, but not to drink).

## For Unfiltered Surface Water

Some water systems use unfiltered surface water. For those systems, the Provincial Health Officer recommends that, **at all times**, people with weakened immune systems should either boil water for one minute, use filtered or distilled water, or use a safe alternative such as bottled water:

- 💧 People with HIV infection, AIDS or other immunocompromised conditions
- 💧 People who have been getting cancer treatment (i.e. radiation therapy or chemo-therapy)
- 💧 People who have had an organ or bone marrow transplant and are taking anti-rejection drugs
- 💧 The very young and the very old

## How do you take precautions?

Precautions include boiling your water for one minute, using filtered or distilled water, or using a safe alternative such as bottled water. Store boiled water in a clean, covered container in the refrigerator. Take precautions for your water for the following uses:

- 💧 Drinking
- 💧 Washing fruits and vegetables
- 💧 Making beverages or ice
- 💧 Brushing teeth

## What are alternate sources?

Alternate sources can mean a number of things, including:

- 💧 Water purchased from an approved bottler
- 💧 Using an appropriate Point of Entry (POE) or Point of Use (POU) system.

If you're considering a POE or POU treatment system, we recommend you explore all options carefully to decide what best suits your needs.

Whatever system you choose, follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance directions carefully. Poorly installed or maintained bottled water or treatment units can pose serious health risks.

More information is available at:

[http://www.nsf.org/consumer/drinking\\_water](http://www.nsf.org/consumer/drinking_water)  
[www.ul.com/water/prodcert/certification.html](http://www.ul.com/water/prodcert/certification.html)