



# Community Public Water System Acute Contaminant Notification and Response Requirements

*NHDES-Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau*

## 1. Public Notice

- ◆ Receive notice of acute contamination (E. coli or nitrate/nitrite) from your laboratory, operator or DWGB.
- ◆ Notify DWGB within 24 hours at **(603) 271-2513** (business hours) or **(603) 223-4381** (after hours).
- ◆ Notify water consumers as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours. **Get help and designate staff** for notification, sampling and correcting the contamination. Perform the following notification tasks:
  - Contact the Town Health Officer to inform how it is being addressed. The Town often receives inquiries also.
  - Develop a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) or use factsheets [DWGB-4-12 "Boil Order FAQs"](#), [DWGB-3-9 Nitrate / Nitrite](#).
  - Complete and distribute [public notice forms](#) with the FAQs or applicable NHDES fact sheet. Community water systems may have pre-printed forms in their Emergency Plans.
  - Community water systems must distribute the public notice through (1) broadcast media (radio or TV); (2) daily newspaper for three days; (3) door-to-door notices; or (4) Reverse 911 provided that current phone numbers are known for **all** service connections and a receipt mechanism confirms that notice was received within 24 hours of transmittal.
- ◆ Additional delivery methods for large public water systems include internet and website postings and delivery of public notices to schools, apartments, large private employers and organizations. Record phone voicemail message for resident calls.
- ◆ Contact critical customers such as health care facilities, dialysis centers, schools, daycares, restaurants, as they may need to implement additional precautions.
- ◆ Once public notice is distributed, sign the certification and return the certification and a copy of the public notice to [dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwmonitoring@des.nh.gov).

- ◆ Set time-frame expectations and provide regular updates to customers, DWGB and Town Health Officer throughout the advisory.

## 2. Sampling & Alternate Water Source

- ◆ Maintain at least 8 spare bacteria sample bottles and 2 nitrate/nitrite bottles on hand for acute response follow-up. Rotate bottle inventory to prevent container expiration.
- ◆ DWGB technical staff will contact you to begin troubleshooting, provide instructions for sampling, and to schedule a site inspection Level 2 Assessment for response to E. coli bacteria.
- ◆ For boil orders, three "repeat" bacteria samples from the distribution system and a "triggered" raw sample from each active well source are required within **24 hours** of the notice of a positive bacteria result, BEFORE chlorinating the system. More repeat samples may be needed to better isolate the problem or for larger service populations. Discuss and agree on the locations for the repeat and triggered samples over the phone with DWGB staff.
- ◆ Within 24 hours of receiving first notification, collect the required samples (nitrate confirmation samples if required, or bacteria repeats and triggered monitoring samples) and deliver to the laboratory within 24 hours. You must use sample forms from your Master Sampling Schedule (the "repeat" and "triggered" for bacteria, or the chemical form for nitrate/nitrite – checkmark the "Confirmation" sample type on the form). You may find your schedule and all associated sampling forms on the NHDES [OneStop website](#) with your 7-digit PWS ID.
- ◆ Contact your laboratory to confirm that they will promptly process your samples, and request at least 8 additional sample bottles (for lifting the boil later). Some laboratories do not accept bacteria samples after noon on Fridays. Request your laboratory to call you as soon as results are available as this impacts follow-up actions needed to return to normal operation.
- ◆ Consider providing an alternative water source such as bottled water (this is not required by the state but may be helpful to your customers and reduce complaints).

## 3. Assessment & Correction

- ◆ A system inspection is required for all Boil Orders. DWGB staff will contact you to schedule completion of a "Level 2 Bacteria Assessment" with a water system representative. [Click here for bacteria assessment forms.](#)
- ◆ Any issues identified that must be corrected in order to address the contamination will be listed on the bacteria assessment report. A tear sheet "Inspection Report" will be issued to the water system representative present at the time of the site inspection, with copy emailed to the system owner. The standard time frame to correct the identified issues and notify DWGB in writing, with photos, is within 30 days of the inspection. Additional time may be granted and approved in writing by DWGB if requested and justified by the water system representative.
- ◆ LIFTING THE ADVISORY
  - BACTERIA: **Once the assessment and corrective actions are completed** you must collect 2 consecutive sets of at least 3 samples per set (DWGB staff will indicate if more are required) at least 24 hours apart, with chlorine <0.1 mg/L for systems without disinfection. These "Lift" samples must be submitted on the General System Evaluation sampling forms from your Master Sampling Schedule (**repeat samples described above can count as first lift set if all are clean**), and MUST list the chlorine residual at <0.1 mg/L on the chain of custody form and the lab report. Therefore, you must sample your water for chlorine immediately before collecting the samples, and only collect samples if chlorine is below 0.1 mg/L. Low-level chlorine test strips for swimming pools are acceptable to test for low chlorine concentrations.
  - NITRATE: The number of samples to lift a Nitrate Advisory will be determined by DWGB technical staff, and nitrate concentrations must be < 10 mg/L.
  - BOTH: Contact DWGB to request an Approval to Lift the Notice when all required samples show "Absent" for both Total Coliform and E. coli, and <10 mg/L for nitrate. DWGB will notify the system in writing when the Notice may be lifted. Follow procedures listed in the Notice until you have received the authorization to Lift.