

## More Information About Boil Water Notices

You hear a story on the radio or television that a boil water notice has been issued for your area. What does that mean?

First, pay attention to whether the notice is **precautionary** or **mandatory**. The Hillsborough County Health Department requires a **precautionary** notice after pressure in the lines drops below a certain level because of a water line break or other issue, or when there are certain kinds of problems at the water plant, such as a loss of disinfection. A precautionary notice doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong with the water - simply that it's possible that contaminants may have entered the system. Thus, customers are advised as a precautionary measure to boil tap water for cooking and drinking.



By comparison, a **mandatory** notice is rare and far more serious, and its provisions should be strictly followed.

A rolling boil for one minute is sufficient. Cool before using. Some people say their water tastes "flat" after it is boiled. You can remedy this by pouring the water back and forth between two containers a few times. Discard any ice from automatic ice-makers. It's safe to use non-boiled water for bathing, but avoid contact with cuts or other wounds.

Boil water notices are in place until tests show the system is clear of contaminants. In the aftermath of a hurricane, keep tuned to your local news media reports for the latest information.

## How Much Water Do I Need?



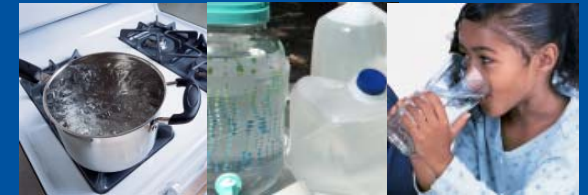
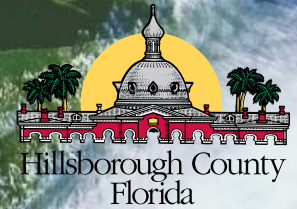
A good rule of thumb is to stock one gallon of water per person per day. People with special needs – such as nursing mothers, young children and family members with illnesses – may require more water. Keep in mind that you also will be drinking more water if you are involved in strenuous physical activities after a storm – such as cleaning up your property – especially if it's hot outside and there is no air conditioning.

Since it takes time for emergency supplies to arrive in a community in the wake of a catastrophic storm, you should plan to have enough water on hand to last you and your family for at least three days. Also, don't forget that your pets need water, too.

Store water in clean containers with tight-fitting lids. Good-quality, food-grade plastic containers (even soda bottles) work best. Avoid containers that may break or decompose, such as glass bottles or waxed cardboard cartons. Never use containers which have previously held chemicals or toxic liquids. Keep the water in a cool location away from the sun.

**Water Resource Services**  
(813) 272-5977  
[www.hillsboroughcounty.org/water](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/water)

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY  
*Board of County Commissioners*  
published May 2008



# Surviving The Storm

**Water and Wastewater Tips  
from Hillsborough County  
Water Resource Services**

# Surviving The Storm...

## Water And Wastewater Tips

**Hurricane preparation is second nature to most Floridians. While you're busy getting ready for storm season, keep this list of tips from Hillsborough County Water Resource Services in your emergency kit.**

- **Make your water do double-duty.** Before the storm, freeze jugs and bottles of drinking water. The frozen water will help keep your refrigerator and freezer cool if you lose electricity. Remember to leave a little room at the top of the container for the frozen water to expand, and never freeze glass bottles.
- **Be a good neighbor – restrict water use.** Flush after a storm and the toilet which bubbles up may be your neighbor's – or your own. Lift stations that aren't working can back wastewater up into the system and people's homes. Even residents connected to septic tanks can experience problems, since septic tanks typically don't work well after excessive rain or flooding. After a storm, avoid unnecessary water use.



• **Know what a "boil water" notice means.** If officials issue a boil water notice, bring water used for cooking,

drinking and brushing teeth to a full rolling boil for one minute. Cool before using.

- **If you can't boil your water, use liquid bleach as a disinfectant.** Boiling is the safest way to purify water, but that may not be possible after a storm if you don't have electricity or

a portable stove. Tap water can be disinfected by adding eight drops of plain, unscented household bleach (4% to 6% active ingredients, as listed on the label) to each gallon of water, then mixing the water and allowing it to stand for a minimum of 30 minutes. Do not use scented bleach, color-safe bleach, or bleach with added cleaners. Cloudy water requires 16 drops of bleach. Other approved chemical disinfectants are available at stores that sell camping and hiking supplies.

- **Protect your private well.** Check before a storm hits to make sure the ground slopes away from your well so stormwater won't pool around the casing. Make sure the well cap is secure, sealed and the vent screen is intact so contaminants cannot enter. If floodwaters do cover the well casing or if there are any changes in the appearance or taste of the water, the well will need to be disinfected, tested and declared safe before normal use can be resumed.

- **Don't open sanitary sewer manholes.** Homeowners have been known to try and protect their homes from sewage overflows by opening the sanitary sewer manholes in streets. Besides being illegal, this creates a dangerous hazard for pedestrians and motorists. Also,

opening the manholes can have the opposite effect of what was intended, by allowing large amounts of rainwater to enter the system.

- **Know the location of your sewer clean-out cap.** In a worst-case scenario where sewage is backing up into your home, you can divert the flow to the yard by removing the sewer clean-out cap. The cap is positioned outdoors; the exact location varies from house to house.

- **Stay away from standing water.** It may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines, or be contaminated by runoff or sewage. Don't drive around barricades or ignore "road closed" signs.



- **Look to your hot water heater.** If you are running short on water for drinking, cooking and hygiene, your hot water heater is another source of usable water. Be sure the electricity or gas is off, and place a container under the drain at the bottom of the tank. Start the water flowing by turning off the water intake valve at the tank and turning on a hot-water faucet somewhere in the house. Open the drain valve at the bottom to allow sediment to flow out until the water runs clear. Swap out containers and discard the sediment-laden water. Refill the tank before turning the gas or electricity back on.

## ...And The Aftermath