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GUIDANCE

Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division

**Instructions for Fecal Coliform or *E. coli* Public Notice**

Exceeding the fecal coliform or *E. coli* maximum contaminant level (MCL) is a Tier 1 violation. Because fecal coliform was present, you must inform your customers to BOIL THEIR WATER until the situation is resolved. Within 24 hours, you must also contact the [Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division](https://dec.vermont.gov/drinking-water-and-groundwater-protection/drinking-water-and-groundwater-protection-division). You should also coordinate with your local health officer. The public notice must be reissued at least every 3 months for as long as the situation exists. Use one or more of the following methods to deliver the notice to consumers:

* Hand or direct delivery (i.e., door to door)
* Posting in conspicuous locations (Community Water Systems may use posting as a secondary method, but must also use radio, television, hand or direct delivery, or other method approved by the Division)
* Radio
* [VT-Alert](http://vem.vermont.gov/vtalert)
* Electronic/Social Media (E-mail, website posting, Press Release, Facebook, Front Porch Forum)
* Television

You may need to use additional methods (e.g., newspaper, delivery of multiple copies to hospitals, clinics, or apartment buildings), because notice must be provided in a manner expected to reach all persons served.

The notice on the following page is appropriate for hand delivery or a newspaper notice. However, you may wish to modify it before using it for other methods. If you do, you must still include all required elements and leave the health effects language in italics unchanged. This language is mandatory. If you post or hand deliver, print your notice on letterhead, if you have it.

**Population Served**

Make sure it is clear who is served by your water system--you may need to list the areas you serve.

**Corrective Action**

In your notice, describe corrective actions you are taking. Listed below are some steps commonly taken by water systems with fecal coliform or *E. coli* violations. Use one or more of the following actions, if appropriate, or develop your own:

• We are chlorinating and flushing the water system.

• We are switching to an alternate drinking water source.

• We are increasing sampling for coliform bacteria to determine the source of the contamination.

• We are repairing the wellhead seal.

• We are repairing the storage tank.

• We are restricting water intake from the river/lake/reservoir to prevent additional bacteria from entering the water system and restricting water use to emergencies.

**After Issuing the Notice**

Send a copy of each type of notice with the Certification section completed to the Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division within ten (10) days from the time you issue the notice. The certification states that you have met all the public notice requirements.

It is recommended that you notify health professionals in the area of the violation. People may call their doctors with questions about how the violation may affect their health, and the doctors should have the information they need to respond appropriately. In addition, health professionals, including dentists, use tap water during their procedures and need to know of contamination so they can use bottled water.

It is a good idea to inform your customers when the violation is resolved.

**DRINKING WATER WARNING**

[Enter Water System Name] [(Enter WSID Number Here)]

water is contaminated with fecal coliform (or *E. coli)*

BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING

**Fecal coliform [or *E. coli*] bacteria** were found in the water supply on [DATE]. These bacteria can make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune systems.

**What should I do?**

**DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST.** Bring all water to a boil, let it boil for one minute, and let it cool before using, or use bottled water. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation **until further notice**. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.

*Fecal coliforms and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, and people with severely compromised immune systems.*

The symptoms above are not only caused by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

**What happened? What is being done?**

Bacterial contamination can occur when increased run-off enters the drinking water source (for example, following heavy rains). It can also happen due to a break in the distribution system (pipes) or a failure in the water treatment process.

[Describe corrective action]. We will inform you when tests show no bacteria and you no longer need to boil your water. We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated time frame].

For more information, please contact [name of contact] at [phone number] or [mailing address].

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

**CERTIFICATION**

Method(s) of Distribution: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date Distributed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(e.g. hand or direct delivery, posting¹, television, radio)

**I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(print name) Certify, as the Responsible Person (or authorized representative) of the water system listed above that this public notice has been provided to customers in accordance with the delivery, content, and format requirements and deadlines in the Vermont Water Supply Rule (Chapter 21, Subchapter 21-10).**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Within 10 days of issuance of public notice, send a copy of the notice to:*

*VT-DEC, Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division, 1 National Life Drive – Davis 4, Montpelier, VT 05620-3521*

1 - Community Water Systems may use posting as a second method, but must also use radio, television, or hand or direct delivery.