

Drinking water advisories

Guidelines and templates



Queensland
Government

Drinking water advisories – Guidelines and templates

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Introduction

In Queensland, drinking water service providers (DWSPs) have a responsibility to provide safe drinking water under the *Public Health Act 2005* and the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. This is achieved through adherence to Drinking Water Quality Management Plans, which are required under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*, and approved by Water Supply Regulation within the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water. During implementation of these approved plans, situations may arise where the safety of the water supplied to customers is compromised due to unforeseen circumstances or events beyond the control of the DWSP. In these situations, a DWSP will need to notify Water Supply Regulation and must consider if a drinking water advisory is needed to mitigate public health risks.

In Queensland, DWSPs are responsible for issuing drinking water advisories. These guidelines are intended to assist DWSPs in preparing and issuing drinking water advisories.

Types of drinking water advisories

A drinking water advisory is a communication between a DWSP and the public about an event that has, or could potentially have, adverse impact(s) on drinking water quality. It includes the preventative actions people can take to reduce or eliminate the chances of contracting disease or illness.

The three types of advisory to be used in Queensland are:

Boil water alert – this tells customers to boil their water before use. This is the most common type of advisory. Boil water alerts are typically issued because of concern about microbial contamination.

Do not consume alert – tells customers to use an alternate source of water for drinking and preparing food and beverages. Do not consume alerts are typically used for chemical and toxin contamination when boiling water is not effective for making it safe.

Do not use alert – warns customers not to use water for certain purposes such as drinking and preparing food and beverages, bathing, handwashing and tooth brushing. Do not use alerts may also be extended to other activities such as clothes washing, washing up and any activity where there may be contact with water. Do not use alerts are rare, and are only required in cases of known microbial, chemical, toxin or radiological contamination where any contact, even with the skin, lungs or eyes, can be dangerous.

Templates for each type of advisory are provided in **Appendices 1 to 3**. Content can be cut and pasted onto DWSP-branded documents.

If a DWSP has to issue any of the drinking water advisories listed above, they will also need to communicate when the issue is resolved and the drinking water is again safe for consumption or use. This process is usually referred to as ‘lifting’ the alert. A DWSP should seek the agreement of Queensland Health before lifting an alert and should then commence public communication.

Appendix 4 contains a template that DWSPs can use to communicate the lifting of any of the three types of alert.

Before an incident – planning for a drinking water advisory

DWSPs are often required to act very quickly when it is necessary to issue a drinking water advisory. Poor planning can result in delays in distributing an advisory, the use of ineffective messaging, and the use of ineffective notification methods. These shortcomings can have serious consequences for the health of the public and could undermine the public's confidence in the DWSP to manage incidents effectively and supply safe drinking water. The importance of adequate preparation is emphasised in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines:

"Maintaining consumer confidence and trust during and after an incident or emergency is essential, and this is largely determined by how incidents and emergencies are handled. A public and media communication strategy should be developed before any incident or emergency situation occurs. Draft public and media notifications should be prepared in advance and formatted for the target audience."

Given that much of the work associated with drawing up and distributing drinking water advisories can be completed in advance, it is recommended that DWSPs undertake preparatory work. This should include consultation with the DWSP's communication team and other relevant stakeholders that may be involved in the decision to issue an advisory or in distributing the relevant information.

Areas of work that should be completed in preparation for the need to issue an advisory include:

- Familiarisation with drinking water advisory templates
- Identification of critical customers
- Establishing a communication network
- Creating key messages
- Determining appropriate methods of notification
- Conducting a test exercise

Familiarisation with drinking water advisory templates

Templates for each type of advisory: 'Boil water alert', 'Do not consume alert', 'Do not use alert' and 'Lifting an alert' are provided in **Appendices 1 to 4**. Persons responsible for compiling the information to be inserted into each template, and those responsible for communicating the information on behalf of the DWSP, should be familiar with each of the templates.

Identification of critical customers and stakeholders

While whole communities often require notification when a drinking water advisory is issued, DWSPs should identify those customers who should be prioritised when it is necessary to communicate a drinking water advisory.

Critical customers should be identified in a DWSP's drinking water quality management plan. In public health terms, critical customers are vulnerable populations (i.e. those more likely to become ill as a result of consuming the affected water) or customers that supply drinking water (or foods and beverages prepared with the affected water) to large numbers of the general public. It is expected that a DWSP would communicate directly with these customers about advisories in a timely manner.

For DWSPs serving large populations, the number of critical customers may be significant. Priority should be given to customers based on potential health consequences of consuming the water. DWSPs may find it helpful to break these critical customers into tiers. **Table 1** provides examples of the sorts of critical customers that may fall into each tier. DWSPs should consult with their local Queensland Health Public Health Unit and the local government Environmental Health departments within their areas of operation when compiling this list. Once DWSPs have identified and prioritised their critical customers, a contact list should be created. For each organisation or individual, the DWSP should record the relevant contact details (phone number, mobile number, after hours number and email address). Regular reviews of contact details should be undertaken to ensure they remain up to date.

Table 1 – Prioritising critical customers

Tier	Types of critical customers
1	Public and private hospitals Nursing and aged care homes Doctors and medical centres Schools and child care facilities Home dialysis patients
2	Food businesses (e.g. cafes, restaurants and takeaways) Food processing/manufacturing facilities/beverage bottling plants Accommodation facilities (include evacuation shelters if activated) Large venues (sporting venues, shopping centres)
3	Public swimming pools

Establishing a communication network

As previously stated, DWSPs are responsible for issuing drinking water advisories in Queensland. However, an important part of a drinking water advisory notification plan is identification of organisations that can help facilitate the communication of an advisory. Advance collaboration, communication and cooperation with other public agencies and private organisations before an actual incident provides the opportunity to:

- Determine existing resources
- Distribute advisories quickly and effectively when they occur
- Develop protocols to assure coordinated, consistent messaging during an advisory
- Share the communication tasks amongst partners

Organisations to include in a communication network include local and state government departments, local media organisations and organisations that work with people that have communication needs (e.g. low literacy, limited English proficiency, cognitive disabilities and hearing or vision impairments). The DWSP should also ensure they have a clear understanding of how to notify local and district disaster management groups if either are operational at the time of issuing an advisory.

Once an organisation has been identified, the details of the relationship should be defined. This can be helpful to clarify roles, responsibilities and capacity to assist the DWSP in facilitating the communication of a drinking water advisory. For each organisation or individual, the DWSP should record the relevant contact details (phone number, mobile number, after hours number and email address). Regular reviews of contact details should be undertaken to ensure they remain up to date.

Creating documents to support the delivery of drinking water advisory key messages

It is helpful to create some documents to support the delivery of drinking water advisory key messages. These include **draft media statements**, **low literacy communication tools** and **frequently asked questions**.

The exact wording from the drinking water advisories (**Appendices 1 to 4**) can be used as part of a media statement with the addition of media contact details inserted at the end of the document.

For boil water alerts, the most common type of drinking water advisory, a low literacy communication tool is provided in **Appendix 5**.

Appendix 6 contains typical frequently asked questions and answers. These can be edited to suit a particular community or scenario and content can be cut and pasted onto DWSP-branded documents. The questions and answers can be used for a number of purposes, including providing to call centre staff, compiling web page content or preparing for media interviews.

Determining appropriate methods of notification

Once the key messages have been developed, the DWSP should identify methods of notifying those affected. Potential methods of communication are detailed in **Table 2**.

DWSP resources can quickly become overwhelmed during an incident when there is a strong demand for information by the public, stakeholders, the media, or political representatives. Consequently, DWSPs should strongly consider a multiple-method approach. DWSPs should also consider if organisations in their communication network are able to provide resources to assist in the communication process.

Consideration should be given to the types of notification methods the DWSP might employ for incidents affecting certain parts of the supply. For instance, in a highly localised incident it may be possible to personally notify all of the residents affected by door-knocking. This approach, however, is not likely to be a practical option for larger scale incidents. The notification methods used should provide a reasonable balance between the directness of the method (e.g. door knocking) and ensuring the affected customers are notified in a timely manner (e.g. live media broadcasts). Such a balance should seek to ensure that affected customers are aware of the advisory, whilst not alarming customers who aren't affected. DWSPs should also ensure they notify their internal staff, such as those working in call centres and others who interact with the public, when an advisory has been issued. By keeping internal staff continually briefed on the status of the advisory and incident, it can help to ensure that messages from the DWSP to the public and its stakeholders are consistent and accurate. DWSPs should develop an internal notification method that provides the information to staff quickly and regularly, with a clear and single point of truth.

Table 2 – Potential methods of communicating drinking water advisories

Communication methods	
Door-knocking	Direct phone contact with critical customers
Letter box drops	Email
Social media	Automated text (SMS) message to registered customers
Web content	Local news media
Radio broadcast	Call centre scripts
TV broadcasts	Electric LED road signs

Conducting a test exercise

DWSPs are encouraged to test their drinking water advisory notification procedures by undertaking mock exercises. Testing of the procedure can provide valuable insights into whether all essential factors have been considered and, more importantly, how communication may be improved. As the need to issue a drinking water advisory may occur at any time, mock exercises should take into account both normal and unusual operating conditions, for example, the need to issue an advisory out of hours, on a public holiday, or during an extreme weather event.

In addition to testing drinking water advisory notification procedures, DWSPs should also consider whether it is necessary to undertake activities to raise public awareness about the implications of an advisory, where to find information if an advisory is issued, or other messages about how to prepare for incidents that may impact drinking water supplies. These educational messages can be used to test existing communications networks or procedures to ensure they are working.

Issuing and lifting a drinking water advisory

The chart in **Figure 1** below provides an overview of the work flow associated with the issuing and lifting of a drinking water advisory. More details on individual steps are provided in the following sections.

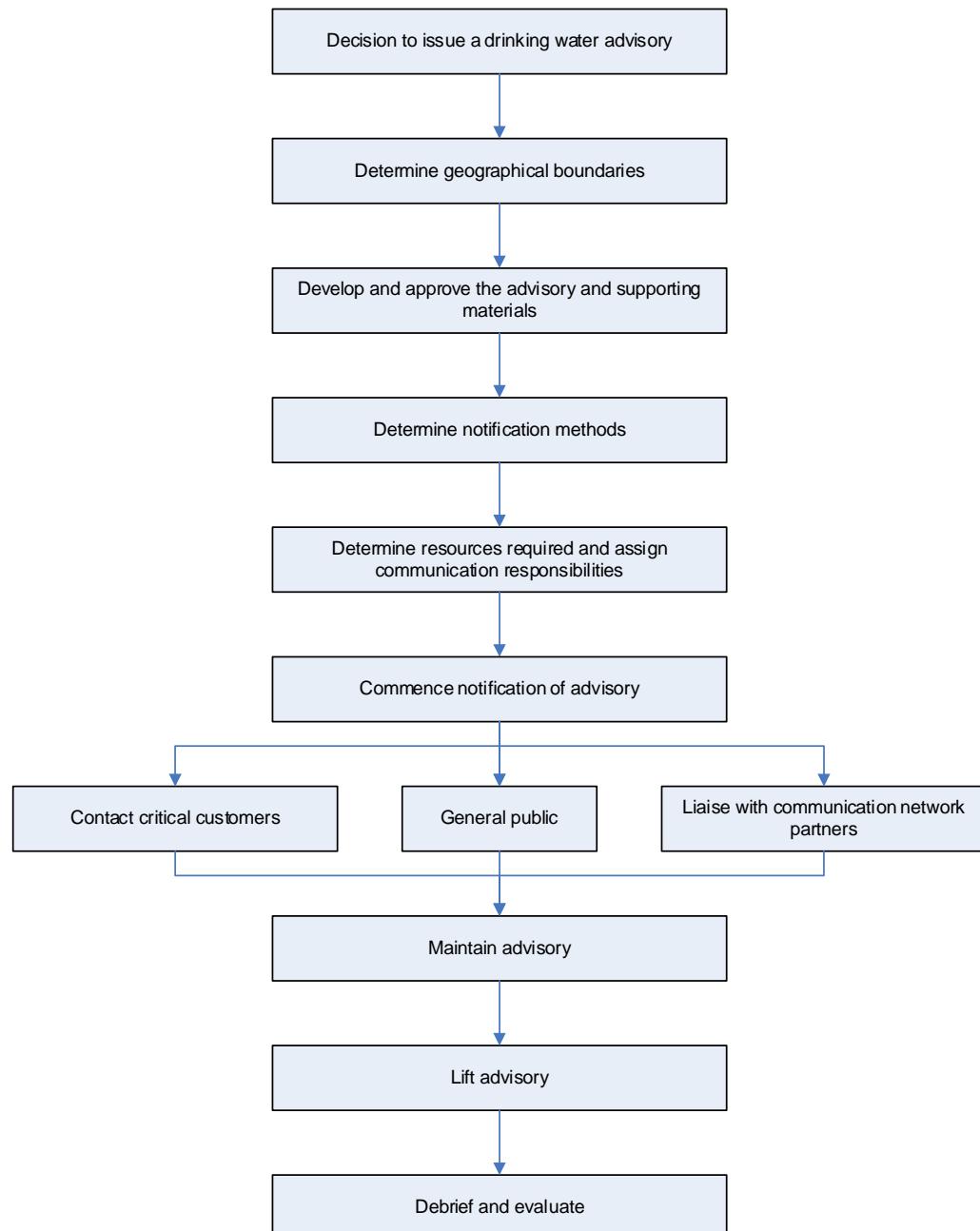


Figure 1 – Issuing and lifting a drinking water advisory

Decision to issue a drinking water advisory

The decision to issue a drinking water advisory may be made by the DWSP or the DWSP may be requested, or directed, to issue an alert by either Queensland Health or the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water. Typical scenarios which may trigger the need to issue a drinking water advisory are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 – Typical scenarios that may trigger the need to issue a drinking water advisory

Scenarios	
Environmental emergencies	<p>Environmental events such as severe storms, flooding, cyclone and bushfires can lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inundation or failure of water treatment plants.• Inundation and contamination of distribution systems.• Destruction/damage of infrastructure.• Deterioration in physical or microbiological quality of source waters that overwhelms treatment capability.• Loss of power, which results in treatment processes failing to work.
Failure of water treatment critical control points/preventative measures	<p>Issues that may lead to the failure of critical control points and other preventative measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impaired or inadequate filtration due to mechanical breakdown or operational failure.• Impaired or inadequate disinfection (including instances where turbidity is above a critical control point in disinfection only schemes).• Failure to protect distribution system from ingress of contamination (e.g. through mains break or unintended cross-connections).
Detection of <i>E. coli</i> or pathogens in treated water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The repeated or persistent detection of <i>E. coli</i> in distribution systems.• The detection of enteric pathogens (e.g. <i>Cryptosporidium</i>). <p>NB. Refer to the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines Information Sheet <i>Guidance for issuing and lifting boil water advisories</i> for guidance on when to issue an advisory in the event of adverse <i>E. coli</i> and pathogen monitoring results.</p>
Outbreak of waterborne disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In cases where confirmed disease is likely to be associated with a drinking water supply.
Chemical/toxin/radiological contaminant	<p>Issues that may result in a chemical, toxin or radiological contamination include:</p>

- Deterioration of source water overwhelms treatment capacity.
- Treatment chemical incident (e.g. over dose or spillage).
- Deliberate sabotage event.

Determine geographical boundaries

Once it has been determined that a drinking water advisory is required, the DWSP should clearly define the affected area. This is important to provide guidance not only for the community, but also for external stakeholders who are either affected or involved in the communication of the advisory.

Maps can be a valuable addition to an advisory when they clearly define the area affected. Boundaries of the area should clearly identify who is and who is not affected by the incident and the size of the affected area. They can also be used to assist in determining the most appropriate notification methods.

Develop and approve the advisory and supporting materials

After defining the affected areas, the relevant drinking water advisory template should be completed and prepared for distribution (see **Appendices 1 to 3**). The DWSP is not required to seek approval from Queensland Health in relation to the content of the advisory, however, this would be good practice.

In addition to the advisory, the DWSP should prepare any supporting documentation such as media releases (use text from advisories in **Appendices 1 to 3**), low literacy advisory materials, social media and web page content, and call centre scripting (see **Appendices 5 and 6**).

Determine notification methods

DWSPs should employ a range of notification methods to ensure a drinking water advisory is communicated to the largest possible proportion of the affected population in a timely manner. In selecting the most appropriate methods, consideration should be given to the size of the affected population, the resources available to facilitate communication, obvious communication barriers (e.g. low literacy, limited English proficiency, cognitive disabilities, and hearing or vision impairments). The DWSP should consider if there are particular circumstances that may impact the notification methods selected (e.g. power outages). DWSPs should be prepared to make adjustments to notification methods as they become aware of specific challenges or communication barriers. If local and state disaster management groups have been activated, DWSPs should notify these groups and should consider requesting their assistance with the communication of the advisory.

Determine resources required and assign communication responsibilities

The notification method (e.g. electronic, paper-based, and people-based) and population affected will determine the resources required to communicate the advisory.

For large scale incidents, it may be necessary to call on the assistance of other organisations within the DWSP's communication network to help communicate the advisory. Properly

coordinating external resources is essential to provide accountability and avoid duplication of work. Where other organisations are involved in the communication of advisories, the DWSPs should ensure they have a clear understanding of the message to be communicated. The DWSP should designate a liaison officer for external organisations to provide updates or redistribute work as needed.

Following the initial communication of the advisory, the DWSP should be prepared to deal with an increase in enquiries. DWSPs should ensure that call centres are adequately staffed and that web-based information addresses frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Commence notification

Once the decision has been made to issue an advisory, the notification should begin as soon as possible. Every effort should be made to begin notification within a timeframe that provides as much opportunity for the public to protect themselves from exposure to the hazard in the drinking water. The DWSP should prioritise the notification of critical customers.

Maintain advisory

An essential part of issuing an advisory is to maintain ongoing communications with those who have been notified about the incident. There is an expectation from the public, stakeholders and Queensland Health that updated information will be provided during an incident until the matter that triggered the alert has been resolved. Whilst there is no specific guidance for how often updates are issued, they should be often enough to capture any significant change to the situation or to remind those affected that the issues with the drinking water have not been resolved. Regular updates, including a date and time of issue, should also help to ensure continued compliance with the alert. DWSPs should ensure that internal staff are provided with updates as well.

Information in the updates should include the status of corrective actions that are being taken, and the timelines expected for their implementation. DWSPs should be mindful that the demand for information and updates will be greater as the scale of the incident increases. The amount of misinformation may increase if DWSPs do not provide regular updates, as the media and public may seek alternate sources for answers to their questions. Queensland Health recommends that DWSPs consider scheduling regular updates during an incident, and that DWSPs should consider the urgency of information needs (e.g. media publication deadlines, operating hours of critical businesses etc.) when creating this schedule.

Lift advisory

Criteria for lifting a drinking water advisory will depend upon the trigger for the advisory and should be discussed and agreed with Queensland Health in each instance. In general terms, lifting an advisory will require evidence that the environmental or operational cause(s) of contamination have been resolved and that the contaminated water has been cleared from the supply. Wherever possible, the efficacy of corrective actions should be demonstrated by undertaking verification monitoring. **Appendix 4** contains a template for lifting a boil water alert, do not consume alert or do not use alert. When communicating the lifting of an alert the DWSP must clearly specify any actions the consumer may be required to take, for example flushing pipes and disinfecting taps.

Debrief and evaluate

DWSPs are encouraged to evaluate the efficacy of any drinking water advisory issued. Evaluations may reveal ways in which the issuing of an advisory can be improved. Any improvements identified should be factored into future drinking water advisory preparatory and notification activities. Queensland Health encourages a debrief and evaluation for each drinking water advisory activity whenever possible.

Useful resources

National Health and Medical Research Council (2011). Australian Drinking Water Guidelines
www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/eh52

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox
www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/dwa-comm-toolbox

For further information contact your nearest Queensland Health Public Health Unit – contact details for all units are available from
www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/contact/public-health-units

Appendix 1: Boil water alert template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(insert date DD/MM/YY)

(Name of area) residents advised to boil drinking water

(Name of water provider) advises all residents in (name of area) to boil tap water used for drinking following (state reason for the alert) affecting the (name of water supply).

This alert applies to all residents in (streets/towns/suburbs) from (date). A map of the affected area is available at (web address).

(Name of water provider) is working (closely with Queensland Health) to resolve the situation.

(Name of water provider) is (state what is being done and why). This may take (estimated times to resolve problem).

The boil water alert will stay in effect until the (name of water provider) and Queensland Health are confident there is no longer a public health concern. Regular updates will be provided to affected communities.

Consuming unboiled drinking water could lead to illness, especially for vulnerable people (e.g. those who are very young, elderly or those with weak immune systems). If you believe the water has made you sick, contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84), your local doctor or local hospital and advise them of your concerns.

People should use cooled boiled water or bottled water for:

- drinking
- brushing teeth
- preparing and cooking foods
- washing raw foods such as fruit and vegetables
- preparing beverages and making ice
- preparing baby formula
- sponge-bathing infants.

Unboiled drinking water can be used for:

- showering and bathing other than infants (avoid getting water in the mouth)
- washing dishes by hand or in a dishwasher
- washing clothes
- flushing toilets.

People should bring drinking water to a rolling boil and then allow water to cool before using it or storing it in a clean, closed container for later use.

Kettles with automatic cut-off switches are suitable for producing boiled water. Variable temperature kettles should be set to boil.

Residents are urged to share this alert with neighbours and friends.

For more information, visit (web address) or phone (phone number of water provider or dedicated hotline if established).

Appendix 2: Do not consume alert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(insert date DD/MM/YY)

(Name of area) residents advised not to consume drinking water

(Name of water provider) advises all residents in (name of area) not to consume tap water used for drinking following the identification of (name of contaminant) in the (name of water supply).

This alert applies to all residents in (streets/towns/suburbs) from (date). A map of the affected area is available at (web address).

(Name of water provider) is working (closely with Queensland Health) to resolve the situation.

The (issue/fault) was detected on (date). (Name of water provider) is (state what is being done and why). This may take (estimated times to resolve problem).

This alert will stay in effect until (name of water provider) and Queensland Health are confident there is no longer a public health concern. Regular updates will be provided to affected communities.

(Name of contaminant, e.g. chlorine) is (describe contaminant).

Consuming drinking water during this alert could lead to illness, especially for vulnerable people (e.g. those who are very young, elderly or those with weak immune systems). If you believe the water has made you sick, contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84), your local doctor or local hospital and advise them of this alert.

(Name of water provider) has established the following alternative drinking water supply arrangements for affected residents:

[Enter alternative supply details here. This section should be clear and unambiguous. If bottled water cannot be provided, alternative but equally safe option(s) need to be explored and explained sufficiently. Representatives from Queensland Health can provide advice as to what may constitute a safe alternative supply].

Alternative safe supplies of drinking water should be used for drinking, preparing food and beverages, brushing teeth and making ice. [Additional information can be provided on the suitability of using the affected water for dishwashing and clothes washing]. Residents should note that boiling the water will not remove the contamination.

Residents are urged to share this alert with neighbours and friends.

For more information, visit (web address) or phone (phone number of water provider or dedicated hotline if established).

Appendix 3: Do not use alert template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(insert date DD/MM/YY)

(Name of area) residents advised not to use drinking water

(Name of water provider) advises all residents in (name of area) not to use tap water for (list unsuitable uses) following the identification of (name of contaminant) in the (name of water supply).

This alert applies to all residents in (streets/towns/suburbs) from (date). A map of the affected area is available at (web address).

(Name of water provider) is working (closely with Queensland Health) to resolve the situation.

The (issue/fault) was detected on (date). (Name of water provider) is (state what is being done and why). This may take (estimated times to resolve problem).

This alert will stay in effect until (name of water provider) (and Queensland Health) (is/are) confident there is no longer a public health concern. Regular updates will be provided to affected communities.

(Name of contaminant, e.g. chlorine) is (describe contaminant).

Consuming drinking water or allowing the water to come into contact with skin during this alert, could lead to illness or discomfort. If you believe the water has made you sick, contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84), your local doctor or local hospital and advise them of this alert.

[Enter advice about the use of water for dishwashing, flushing toilets and washing clothes].

(Name of water provider) has established the following alternative drinking water supply arrangements for affected residents:

[Enter alternative supply details here. This section should be clear and unambiguous. If bottled water cannot be provided, alternative but equally safe option(s) need to be explored and explained sufficiently. Representatives from Queensland Health can provide advice as to what may constitute a safe alternative supply].

Alternative safe supplies of drinking water should be used for drinking, preparing food and beverages, brushing teeth and making ice.

[Additional information can be provided on the suitability of using the affected water for dishwashing and clothes washing]. Residents should note that boiling the water will not remove the contamination.

Residents are urged to share this alert with neighbours and friends.

For more information, visit (web address) or phone (phone number of water provider or dedicated hotline if established).

Appendix 4: Lifting an alert template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(insert date DD/MM/YY)

Drinking water alert lifted in (name of area)

(Name of water provider) advises all residents in **(name of area)** that tap water used for drinking is now safe to consume.

This notice applies to all residents in **(streets/towns/suburbs)** from **(date)**.

There is no longer a public health concern over the quality of drinking water, and it is now considered safe for all typical uses including drinking, preparing food and beverages, personal washing, dishwashing, laundry purposes and flushing toilets.

(Name of water provider) has worked **(closely with Queensland Health)** over **(time period)** to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. **(Describe corrective actions)** have been taken to protect the safety of the drinking water. **(Both organisations/name of water provider)** will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Residents should flush out affected water from the pipes in their home **(and disinfect inside and outside of taps, if flooded)**.

Residents are asked to share this notice with neighbours and friends.

For more information, visit **(web address)** or phone **(phone number of water provider or dedicated hotline if established)**.

Appendix 5: Low literacy boil water alert template

The following page contains a low literacy boil water alert template that may be used to assist the notification of drinking water advisories to people with additional communication needs (e.g. low literacy, limited English proficiency, cognitive disabilities etc.)

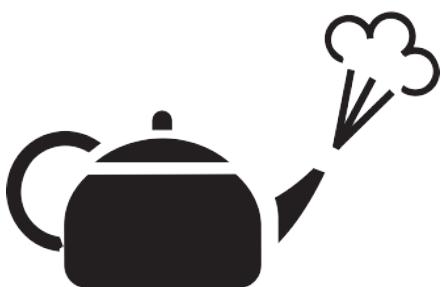
Boil Water Alert

(logo of drinking water service provider)

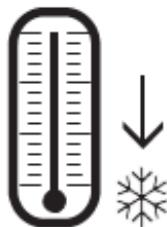
(Name of area affected)'s drinking water is not safe at the moment.
Boiling the water will make it safe to drink.



1. Fill a kettle or pot with water



2. Boil the water



3. Let the water cool



4. Store in a clean, covered container

When the water has been boiled and is cool, use it for:

- drinking
- making baby formula
- making ice
- preparing and cooking food
- washing plates and cutlery
- brushing teeth
- sponge-bathing babies

Tap water is still safe for:

- showers and baths
- shaving
- flushing toilets
- washing clothes
- watering plants

You will be told when **(name of affected area)**'s drinking water is safe again.

For more information, contact:

(name of drinking water service provider)
(insert phone number)
(insert website)

Appendix 6: Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Frequently asked questions for a boil water alert

NB. These questions and answers will need to be reviewed for each alert to ensure the information is relevant. Additional entries may be required.

General

What are people being advised to do?

(*Name of drinking water service provider*) is advising all residents in (*name of area*) to boil tap water following the identification of (*state reason for the alert*) in the (*name of water supply*) water supply.

Boiled water should be allowed to cool and be stored in a clean, closed container. The water will remain safe in the container.

Cooled boiled water should be used for:

- drinking
- cleaning teeth
- preparing and cooking food
- washing raw foods such as fruit and vegetables
- preparing beverages and making ice
- preparing baby formula, and
- sponge-bathing infants.

You don't need to use cooled, boiled water for bathing (other than sponge-bathing infants), washing dishes by dishwasher or by hand, washing clothes or flushing the toilet.

Avoid getting water in your mouth while showering.

Boiling water

How do I boil my water?

Bring water to a rolling boil and allow the water to cool before using it or storing it in a clean, closed container for later use.

Kettles with automatic cut-off switches are suitable for producing boiled water. Variable temperature kettles should be set to boil.

Care should be taken when boiling water to avoid scalding.

How long do I have to hold the water at boiling point?

You just need to bring the water to a rolling boil. It doesn't need to be held at boiling point for any specified period of time.

Why do I have to boil my water?

The safety of the (*name of drinking water supply affected*) water supply has been compromised. Boiling the water will make it safe to consume.

Should I use bottled water?

You may choose to use bottled water if it is available.

Food and beverages	
Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, or water dispenser?	<p>Do not use water from any appliance connected to your home plumbing.</p> <p>This includes your coffee machine if it is plumbed in and any water or ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer. Although these appliances may have built in filters, most do not remove or kill bacteria or viruses.</p> <p>Use boiled or bottled water to make coffee and ice. When the boil water alert is lifted, consult the owner's manual and sanitise appliances.</p>
What about ice?	<p>Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers.</p> <p>Throw out all ice made with tap water.</p> <p>Make new ice with boiled or bottled water.</p>
What should I do about preparing food and beverages? How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces?	<p>Wash fruits and vegetables with cooled, boiled water or bottled water.</p> <p>Bring water to a rolling boil before adding to food to cook.</p> <p>Use boiled water when preparing drinks such as tea and coffee.</p> <p>Use cooled boiled water when preparing drinks, such cordials.</p> <p>Wash food preparation surfaces with cooled boiled water.</p>
What should I do about feeding my baby?	<p>If you are breastfeeding, continue as normal.</p> <p>If breastfeeding is not an option:</p> <p>Use ready-to-use formula, if possible.</p> <p>Prepare powdered or concentrated formula with bottled water. Use cooled boiled water if you do not have bottled water.</p> <p>Wash and sterilise bottles and teats using cooled boiled water or bottled water before use.</p>
How do I wash dishes during this time?	Dishes should be washed in a dishwasher or in hot soapy water and left to air-dry completely before being used again.
Health	
I have already drunk the water. Will I get sick?	<p>Most people who drink this water will not get sick.</p> <p>If you do get sick, the symptoms are typically similar to food poisoning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nausea • diarrhoea • cramps • possibly a mild fever. <p>People most at risk of complications include the elderly, the very young, or those with weak immune systems. If you believe the water has made you sick, contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or consult your local doctor and advise them of this alert.</p>

What should I do if I have symptoms?	<p>The most important thing to do is avoid dehydration. Drink plenty of safe fluids and avoid drinks such as alcohol, soft drinks, and drinks that contain caffeine, like energy drinks, coffee and tea.</p> <p>If you are concerned about your health or the health of a family member, contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or your local doctor and advise them of this boil water alert.</p>
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Hygiene

Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?	No. Do not use tap water to brush your teeth. Use cooled boiled water or bottled water.
Is it safe to take a shower or bath?	<p>Yes, it is safe to take a bath or shower, but be careful not to swallow any water.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to sponge-bathing young children and infants to ensure they don't swallow any water.</p> <p>Cover any wounds with a waterproof dressing.</p>
What about shaving?	Yes, you can shave as usual.
What about doing laundry?	Yes, it is safe to do laundry as usual.

Other common questions

Do I need to boil water for my pets?	You can boil water for pets as a precaution but it is best to check with your vet about the health of your pets.
Could my swimming pool be contaminated if I've topped it up with tap water?	Pools are safe to continue using as normal provided they are appropriately maintained and chlorine levels are good. [DWSP to consult Queensland Health for specific advice if the drinking water has been contaminated with Cryptosporidium]
Is it safe for my children to play with the hose or in the paddling pool?	As a precaution, it is recommended that children avoid this activity until the boil water alert has been lifted.
Is it safe to water my vegetable garden with tap water?	Yes, it is safe to water your garden, including vegetables, herbs, and fruit trees with unboiled water. However, it is recommended that you wash raw foods with cooled boiled water before eating.
Can I drink the rainwater from my rainwater tank?	Roof-harvested rainwater can contain disease-causing microorganisms that pose a risk to health.

	If you choose to use rainwater, you should boil it and allow it to cool before consuming.
E.coli	
What is <i>E. coli</i> ?	<i>Escherichia coli</i> (<i>E. coli</i>) are bacteria that are found in high numbers in the faeces of warm-blooded animals. Though most types of <i>E. coli</i> do not cause disease, the presence of <i>E. coli</i> in water indicates faecal contamination has occurred and disease-causing microorganisms may be present.
Why is drinking water tested for <i>E. coli</i> ?	All drinking water service providers are required to test for <i>E. coli</i> . The results from these tests provide important information on the microbial safety of water being supplied.

Frequently asked questions for a do not consume alert

NB. these questions and answers will need to be reviewed for each alert to ensure the information is relevant. Additional entries may be required.

General

What are people being advised to do?	<p>(Name of drinking water service provider) is advising all residents in (name of area) not to consume tap water following the identification of (state reason for the alert) in the (name of water supply) water supply. Consuming the tap water during this alert could lead to illness.</p> <p>(Name of water provider) has made arrangements for an alternative supply of drinking water to be provided to affected residents:</p> <p>[Enter alternative supply details here].</p> <p>This supply of safe drinking water should be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• drinking• cleaning teeth• preparing and cooking food• washing raw foods such as fruit and vegetables• preparing beverages and making ice• preparing baby formula, and• sponge-bathing infants. <p>Residents should note that boiling the water will not remove the contamination present in the tap water.</p>
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Boiling water

Will boiling my water make it safe to drink?	No, boiling your water may actually increase the concentration of contamination.
Should I use bottled water?	You may choose to use bottled water if it is available.

Food and beverages

Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, or water dispenser?	<p>Do not use water from any appliance connected to your home plumbing.</p> <p>This includes your coffee machine if it is plumbed in and any water or ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer. Although these appliances may have built in filters, most do not remove chemicals effectively.</p> <p>Use a safe alternative supply of drinking water to make coffee and ice.</p> <p>When the do not consume alert is lifted, consult the owner's manual and flush appliances with tap water.</p>
What about ice?	<p>Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers or ice makers. Throw out all ice made with tap water.</p> <p>Make new ice with a safe alternative supply of drinking water.</p>

What should I do about preparing food and beverages? How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces?	Wash fruits and vegetables with a safe alternative supply of drinking water. Use a safe alternative supply of drinking water when preparing drinks, such as coffee, tea, and cordial. Wash food preparation surfaces with a safe alternative supply of drinking water.
What should I do about feeding my baby?	If you are breastfeeding, continue as normal. If breastfeeding is not an option: Use ready-to-use formula, if possible. Prepare powdered or concentrated formula with a safe alternative supply of drinking water. Wash and sterilise bottles in a safe alternative supply of drinking water.
How do I wash my dishes?	[This will depend on the contaminant – DWSP should obtain specific advice from Queensland Health]
Health	
What should I do if I have symptoms?	Consumption of affected water could lead to [list of symptoms should be obtained from Queensland Health] . If you are concerned, contact 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or consult your local doctor and advise them of this alert.
Hygiene	
Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?	No. Do not use tap water to brush your teeth. Use a safe alternative supply of drinking water.
Is it safe to take a shower or bath?	Yes, it is safe to take a bath or shower, but be careful not to swallow any water. Consideration should be given to sponge-bathing young children and infants to ensure they don't swallow any water. Cover any wounds with a waterproof dressing.
What about shaving?	Yes, you can shave as usual.
What about doing laundry?	Yes, it is safe to do laundry as usual.
Other common questions	
What about water for my pets?	[This will depend on the contaminant – DWSP should obtain specific advice from Queensland Health]
Could my swimming pool be contaminated if I've topped it up with tap water?	[This will depend on the contaminant – DWSP should obtain specific advice from Queensland Health]
Is it safe for my children to play with the hose or in the paddling pool?	As a precaution, it is recommended that children avoid this activity until the boil water alert has been lifted.
Is it safe to water my vegetable garden with tap water?	[This will depend on the contaminant – DWSP should obtain specific advice from Queensland Health]
Can I drink the rainwater from my rainwater tank?	Rooftop-harvested rainwater can contain disease-causing microorganisms that pose a risk to health. If you choose to use rainwater, you should boil it and allow it to cool before consuming.

Frequently asked questions for lifting an alert

General

Is the local drinking water now safe to use?	<p>(Name of drinking water service provider) advises all residents in (name of area) that tap water is safe to consume again.</p> <p>There is no longer a public health concern over the quality of drinking water, and it is now considered safe for all typical uses including drinking, preparation of food and beverages, personal washing, dishwashing, laundry purposes and flushing toilets.</p> <p>Residents should flush out affected water from the pipes in their home (and disinfect inside and outside of taps if flooded).</p> <p>For more information visit (web address) or phone (phone number of water provider or dedicated hotline if established).</p>
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Abbreviations

ADWG	Australian Drinking Water Guidelines
DWSP(s)	Drinking Water Service Provider(s)
<i>E. coli</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>
LED	Light Emitting Diode
NTU	Nephelometric Turbidity Unit
SMS	Short Message Service