Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES · USA

CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

EPA

American Water Works Association

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All information found in this document can also be accessed online
and printed from CDC's Healthy Water website at
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Table of Contents

About the Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox 1

Acknowledgments 2

Introduction 7

Overview 8

Why Are Drinking Water Advisories Issued? 9

Small Water Systems 12

Section 1: Before an Event—Preparing for an Advisory 13

Overview 14

Checklist: Before an Event 15

Organizing for Drinking Water Advisories 17

Collaborating with Partners 23

Developing a Message 29

Conducting Exercises 31

Tools & Templates: Before an Event—Preparing for an Advisory 34

- Information for Communication Planning 35
- Point of Contact for Notification of an Advisory 36
- Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet 38
- Message Mapping Template 43
- Sample Message Map 44
- Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet 45
- Spokesperson Assessment Tool 47
- Critical Customer Checklist 48
- Point of Contact Template 49

Q&As and Fact Sheets— Advisory Advice 50
Quick Reference Facts 51
Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories 52
Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory 58
Hoja informativa sobre qué hacer durante una advertencia para hervir el agua 61
Frequently Asked Questions About Coliforms and Drinking Water 65
Frequently Asked Questions About Groundwater Rule Advisories 67
Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory 69
Preguntas frecuentes acerca de qué hacer después de una advertencia para hervir el agua 71
Point of Contact for Coordination During an Advisory 73
Water System Information Worksheet 75
Exercise Planning Template 77

Section 2: During an Event— Issuing an Advisory 79

Overview 80
Checklist: During an Event 81
Initiating an Advisory 83
Preparing an Advisory 86
Distributing an Advisory 89
Ending an Advisory 96
Tools & Templates: During an Event— Issuing an Advisory 97
Call Center Data Checklist 98
Key Questions for the Public Information Officer 99
Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement 100
Automated Messages 101
Working with the Media Template 104
Media Alert Template 106
How to Use Press Release Templates 107

Tier I Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template 108
Significant Pressure Loss Advisory Press Release Template 110
Advisory Update Press Release Template 111
Ending an Advisory Press Release Template 112

Section 3: After an Event— Evaluating an Advisory 113

Overview 114
Checklist: After an Event 115
Reporting Requirements 116
Debriefing an Event 117
Conducting an Evaluation 118
Modifying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) 121
Updating Public Outreach 122
Tools & Templates: After an Event— Evaluating an Advisory 123
Debriefing Discussion Guide 124
Advisory Feedback Form 125
Call Center Data Collection Framework 126
Post-Advisory Community Survey 128
Corrective Action Tracking Form 134
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Updates 135
Debriefing Evaluation Form 136
Follow-Up Memo 138

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations 139

Appendix B: Online Resources 145

Appendix C: Toolbox Bibliography 149

List of Tables

Table 1: Examples of Target Audiences and Organizations for Drinking Water Advisory Communications and Potential Agencies for Assisting with This Communication 24

Table 2: Examples of Types and Sources of Drinking Water Advisory Data 120

List of Figures

Figure 1: Toolbox Flow Chart 8

Figure 2: Range of Situations for Drinking Water Advisories 11

Figure 3: Layers of Outreach 27

Figure 4: Issuing a Drinking Water Advisory Flow Chart 82

Figure 5: Example of a Simple Map to Designate an Area Affected by a Drinking Water Advisory 84

About the Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox

Our goal is to provide a protocol and practical toolbox for communicating with stakeholders and the public about water advisories that is based upon research and identified practices. The project focuses on water systems and addresses the range of situations that generate drinking water advisories.

This project was a collaborative effort among the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA), and the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA).

A technical workgroup of public health and drinking water agencies and drinking water system experts advised and guided the project. The project also engaged a broad cross-section of relevant stakeholders and technical experts including local government officials and emergency response and hazard communication experts.

This toolbox was reviewed by EPA and state primacy agencies. Every effort was made to ensure that the toolbox complies with the Public Notification Rule when necessary.

More than 500 documents, protocols, regulations, and other resources related to the issuing of drinking water advisories were compiled. Nearly 100 interviews were conducted with water systems, primacy agencies, and local public health departments in the United States and Canada.

These findings revealed:

- Advice to the public varies widely from state to state and community to community.
- Advisories are a common occurrence in some states and a rare event in others.
- Major events or disasters were the primary reasons for collaboration between drinking water systems and health departments.
- Terminology for advisories is inconsistent.
- Templates and advisory content are difficult to change or adapt to specific audiences or needs.
- The EPA Public Notification Handbook is the primary information source for drinking water advisories.
- Agency responsibilities for communicating with institutions, such as hospitals, schools, and restaurants, are highly variable.
- Good relationships between water systems and local public health departments are often dependent on established relationships between individuals.
- Local health departments may lack the resources or expertise to address drinking water issues.
- Local health departments are willing to be consulted by water systems when requested.

Acknowledgments

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Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Association of State Drinking Water Administrators

American Water Works Association

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health, Environmental Health Services Branch

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Environmental Protection Agency

National Environmental Health Association

Introduction

- Overview
- Why Are Drinking Water Advisories Issued?
- Small Water Systems

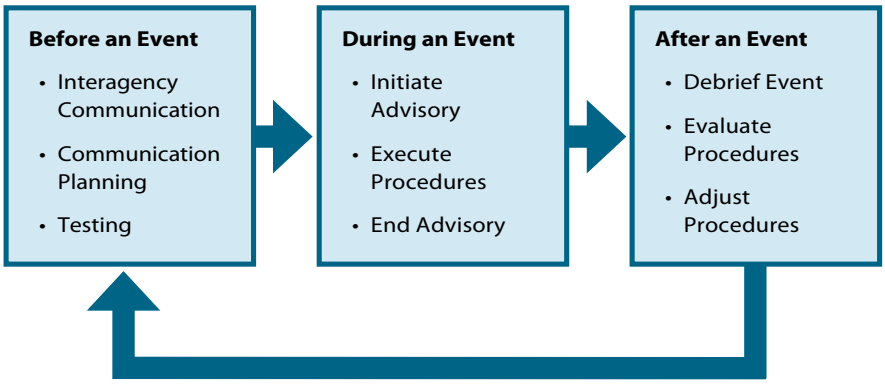
Overview

The Drinking Water Advisory Communication Toolbox provides information on how to plan for, develop, implement, and evaluate drinking water advisories. The approach presented recognizes the differences in scope, scale, and severity of situations that trigger advisories—a main break, a hurricane, a drop in pressure, or intentional contamination. These differences affect the types of tools, planning, and communication used by drinking water systems.

This toolbox includes instructions on how to prepare before an event, what to do during an event, templates and tools to use, and recommendations for follow-up actions and assessments after an event. The purpose of the toolbox is to enable water systems to communicate effectively with partners and the public in order to protect public health.

Figure 1 shows the process for preparing for, issuing, and following up after a drinking water advisory.

Figure 1: Toolbox Flow Chart



Each toolbox section includes a checklist of steps. Not every step applies in all circumstances. Each section has a set of tools that applies to its content. The tools can be adapted by water systems to fit their needs.

Icon Key

Tools and Templates

Resources

This toolbox complements the EPA's Revised Public Notification Handbook.

Different Names for Advisories

Individual states have different names for drinking water advisories depending on the situation. Advisories are frequently called "notices," "alerts," and "orders."

Why Are Drinking Water Advisories Issued?

Water systems and state or local agencies issue drinking water advisories when they believe water quality is or may be compromised. Advisories tell individuals, schools, hospitals, businesses, and others about the situation and how to take immediate action.

Drinking water advisories:

- **Provide information—** An advisory may be issued when consumers need to receive important information but do not need to take any action. For example, a water system may issue an advisory to inform households about seasonal changes in water taste.
- **Encourage preparedness—** Advisories may help customers prepare for planned disruption in service or anticipated water quality threats. Advisories may affect a small area, such as during distribution system construction or repair. Advisories also can urge customers to prepare for a large area event, such as an approaching hurricane. This type of advisory alerts people to watch or listen for more information.
- **Recommend action—** Advisories may tell customers to take specific actions, such as to boil water or use bottled water. These advisories may be issued as a precaution or in response to a waterborne disease outbreak.
- **Meet public notification requirements—** Advisories are required by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) when specific circumstances exist. The SDWA requires communication with customers when the water system does not comply with a regulation.

Notes

Precautionary and Mandatory Advisories

State and federal regulations specify when drinking water advisories are required. In other instances, water systems or the local public health department may issue precautionary advisories at their discretion.

- *Precautionary* advisories are issued as a protective measure.
- *Mandatory* advisories are issued as required by state and federal law to protect public health.

Consult with state primacy agency when developing drinking water advisory protocols.

Main Types of Advisories

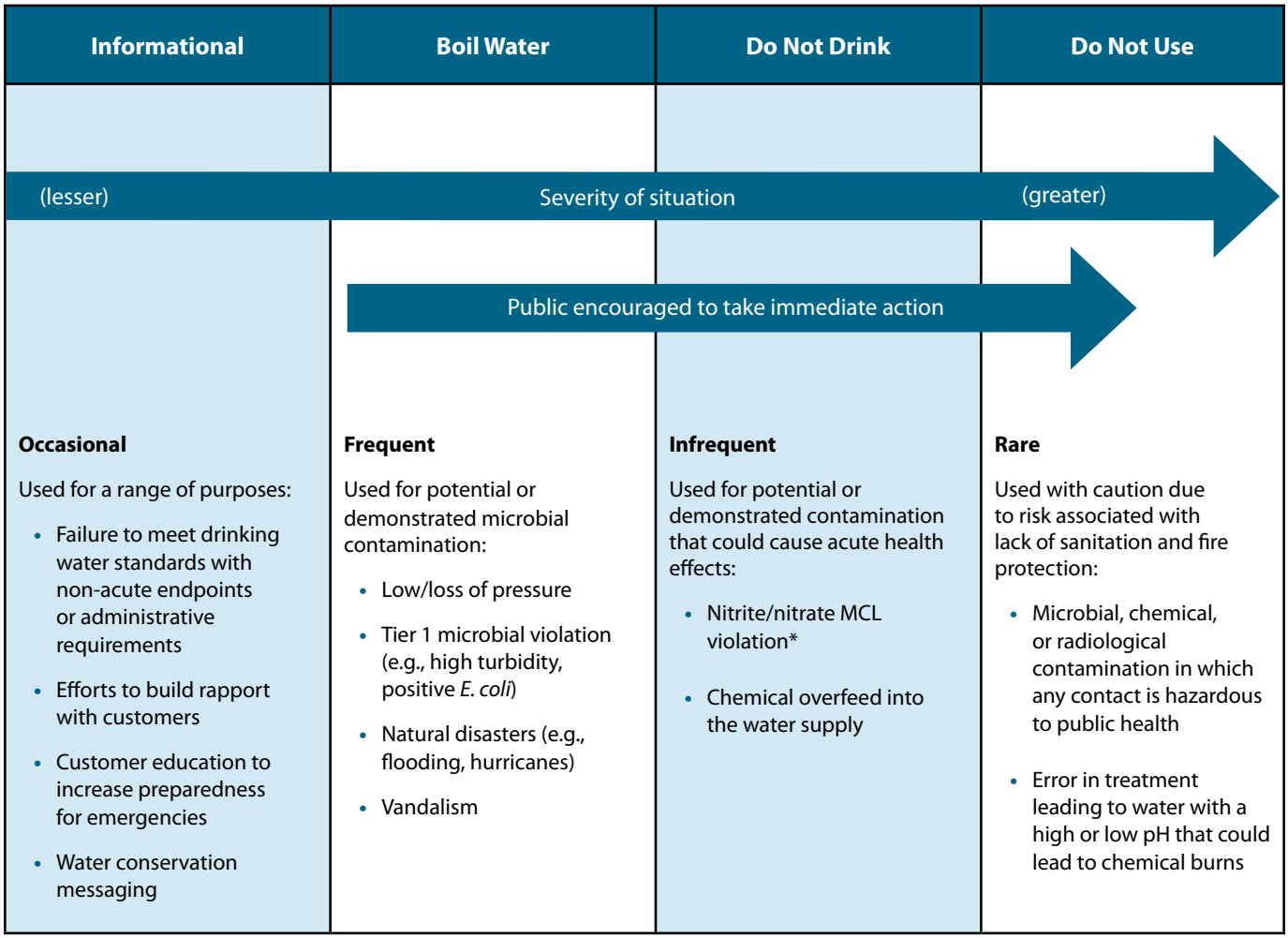
- **Informational—** Communicate planned or anticipated changes in water quality and provide advice on appropriate action.
- **Boil Water—** Tells customers to boil water before use. Most common type of advisory. They may be precautionary if there is a potential threat to the drinking water supply, or they may be mandatory as required by state and federal regulations. Boil water advisories typically are issued because of concern about microbial contamination.
- **Do Not Drink—** Tells customers to use an alternative source of water. Do Not Drink advisories are typically issued for chemical contamination.
- **Do Not Use—** Warns customers not to use tap water for any purpose, including flushing toilets and bathing. Do Not Use advisories are typically used only in cases of known microbial, chemical, or radiological contamination when any contact, even with the skin, lungs, or eyes, can be dangerous. Such advisories are rare because of the risks associated with the lack of water for sanitation and fire protection.

Figure 2 shows the range of situations that might trigger a drinking water advisory and the type of advisory that would be issued in each situation.

Advisory Information

Advisories can include information about preparing food, beverages, or ice; dishwashing; and hygiene, such as brushing teeth, bathing, and flushing toilets.

Figure 2: Range of Situations for Drinking Water Advisories



Note: These are examples of potential reasons to issue an advisory; this is not intended to be a comprehensive list. Consult your primacy agency for more information.

** Maximum Contaminant Level*

Small Water Systems

Because small water systems often have less capacity to implement advisory protocols than larger systems, this toolbox also was designed and tested with small water systems in mind.

Implementing the actions described in this toolbox generally should not require outside support from consultants or others. However, building an effective network by collaborating with other public sector partners and community organizations will help small systems succeed in their efforts.

Suggestions for Small Systems

- Identify and prioritize specific tools or sections from this toolbox to use.
- Incorporate water advisory protocol planning into regular activities, such as sanitary surveys and updating emergency response plans (ERPs).
- Build water advisory protocols into regular communication, such as customer updates.
- Partner with local public health authorities and neighboring water systems

Notes

Section 1: Before an Event— Preparing for an Advisory

- Overview
- Checklist: Before an Event
- Organizing for Drinking Water Advisories
- Collaborating with Partners
- Developing a Message
- Conducting Exercises
- Tools and Templates: Before an Event– Preparing for an Advisory

Overview

To issue a drinking water advisory, a water system must act quickly and in close coordination within its organization and among its partner agencies. Preparation is essential. Most of the work can be done in advance of a planned or unplanned event.

Pre-event planning allows a water system to design advisories and issue them through a predetermined process. Advance preparation speeds delivery of accurate and useful information to affected customers. This information can be reused for future events.

Icon Key

 Tools and Templates

 Resources

Notes

Checklist: Before an Event

Organizing for Drinking Water Advisories

- ☐ Conduct an assessment of assets and resources needed to issue a drinking water advisory.
- ☐ Review state regulations and guidance for public notification and the EPA Revised Public Notification Handbook.
- ☐ Consult your organization's strategic communication plan.
- ☐ Plan for media activities.
- ☐ Integrate communications as part of your emergency response standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Collaborating with Partners

- ☐ Identify partners and critical and wholesale customers.
- ☐ Record and regularly update contact information.
- ☐ Develop a communication network of public agencies and private entities for collaboration during an advisory.
- ☐ Meet and discuss protocols and resources for drinking water advisories with agency partners and community organizations.
- ☐ Plan and conduct regular communication among partner agencies and private organizations.

Notes

Developing a Message

- ☐ Collaborate with your communication network to develop messages for various advisories and specific audiences.
- ☐ Translate and format messages for special populations (e.g., non-English speakers, visually impaired).

Conducting Exercises

- ☐ Refer to the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).
- ☐ Plan exercises.
- ☐ Conduct exercises.
- ☐ Debrief after exercises and incorporate appropriate changes in protocols.

Notes

Organizing for Drinking Water Advisories

Conduct an Assessment

Understanding your system's operations, vulnerabilities, stakeholders, partners, and audiences is an important first step in your planning efforts. Begin by evaluating the following:

- Existing relationships among partners, including public health, public safety, schools, businesses, and local government. See Table 1 for examples.
- Internal and external audiences and stakeholders.
- Information needs of different audiences.
- Existing communication plans and resources (e.g., bill inserts, Consumer Confidence Reports, media contacts).
- Skills, technologies, staff, time, and money available to support an exchange of information with target audiences and agencies. See Table 1 for examples.
- Resources for public outreach, such as Reverse 911 or e-mail alerts.
- Existing requirements set by state or local agencies or by the water system's governing body.
- Threats and infrastructure vulnerabilities.
- Emergency response plans (ERPs).

Gap Analysis

Once you've conducted the assessment, it is important to identify the gaps and additional resources needed to meet responsibilities for issuing drinking water advisories.

Considerations

When planning for a drinking water advisory, consider:

- *A range of event scenarios*
- *Normal and challenging operating conditions*
- *Time of day, day of the week, and season of the year*

Review Regulations and Guidance

Primacy Agency

Each state that has primacy has specific regulations for public notification and information sharing. Local public health and water systems personnel need information for a 24/7 point of contact at the primacy agency.

For information on state-specific contact information, regulatory requirements, guidance, and templates see the **SDWA Primacy Agency Finder** from the **Association of State Drinking Water Administrators** (ASDWA). See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Primacy Agency**.

Federal Guidance

There is federal guidance for developing public notices under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Resources are also available from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- **PNiWriter**— A web-based tool for preparing public notices.
- **Revised Public Notification Handbook**— EPA guidance explaining regulatory requirements.

Know Your Primacy Agency

Every state is unique. Know your state SDWA primacy agency's practices, communication channels, and responsibilities related to drinking water advisories.

Consult Strategic Communication Plan

A strategic communication plan is the foundation for decision-making and resource allocation, both ongoing and in times of crisis.

A strategic communication plan helps a water system prepare to issue a drinking water advisory by identifying ahead of time:

- Audiences and stakeholders.
- Critical issues for the water system (e.g., risk, safety, quality, infrastructure).
- Points of integration for operations and communication SOPs.
- Communication objectives (e.g., information, preparedness).
- Strategies to accomplish objectives.
- Actions required to carry out the strategies.

See **Information for Communication Planning** for more information.

Effective Risk Communication

Drinking water advisories are a form of risk communication. The protocols for issuing an advisory must effectively describe:

- When to distribute an advisory (and when not to).
- What information to provide.
- Who is(are) the specific audience(s) for that event (including susceptible populations).
- How to recognize and communicate the conclusion of the event.
- Where to distribute messages.
- What actions must be taken.
- Why these actions must be taken.
- For more information on effective risk communication, see **Appendix B: Online Resources, Risk Communication**.

Where to Find Help

*If your water system does not have a strategic communication plan, see **Appendix B: Online Resources, Risk Communication** for more information that may be helpful in developing one.*

Plan for Media Activities

Successful advisories rely on multiple types of communication. Door hangers, websites, automated messages, and other methods of communication must be combined for an effective drinking water advisory. The media is a primary channel for public notification and is critical to issuing an advisory.

Planning for media activities can improve implementation of the advisory. Scope, scale, and severity determine the level of media involvement— the larger the event, the larger the media effort. Factors to consider include the following:

- **Timing:** Consider the operations of your local media. Many media outlets are not able to respond on weekends or after hours. Contact local media outlets to understand their staffing, hours, or other limitations. Plan appropriately for media outlets and communication channels. For example, if an advisory is issued during business hours or commuting times, radio reaches homes, offices, and cars.
- **Audiences:** If an advisory covers a wide area, use a media release to multiple outlets. Smaller areas may call for use of specific media channels as well as other methods of communication. Audiences with special needs, such as a large population of people who speak little or no English, are part of the decisions about media, including ethnic media. See the **Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet** and **Appendix B: Online Resources, Risk Communication**.
- **Channels**: Identify the media outlets that cover specific areas of the water system service area and the region. In rural areas, television news may come out of a large urban area far away. Partners and their communication networks will have additional information about communication channels. Identify criteria on which to prioritize media outlets based on the scope, scale, and severity of the situation. For example, if an advisory is issued during working hours, radio, e-mails, and news websites may be the most immediate and viable outlets to use to distribute the message to the working public.
- **Media Messages:** Use the **Message Mapping Template** and **Sample Message Map** or the **Single Overriding Communication Objectives (SOCO) Worksheet** to prepare press releases and statement templates specific to the water system and different scenarios. These materials can be generalized

Tip

Ask media outlets about their timing. How long will it take them to post and announce information on websites and announce on television? Also ask how they would use maps and graphics to show the advisory area.

Small System Note

If a press list or wire service is not available, work with partners and local government to set up access for communicating advisories to the media

and put into electronic or paper formats. Insert the prepared materials into emergency response plans (ERPs) and protocols.

- **Approval:** Note the procedures on how media materials will be reviewed and who will approve them. Work with partners in the communication network and understand their approval process.
- **Other Information:** Include external sources of additional information in media materials. Contact names and numbers for primacy agencies and local public health departments are good sources for reporters. Links to primacy agencies and health departments can be added to media websites to help answer customer questions. Work with partners to identify additional information sources. See Appendix B: Online Resources, Risk Communication.

Designate and Train Spokespersons

The spokesperson's role is to communicate directly with media through briefings and interviews and to interact with the public. Designate a primary and backup spokesperson during planning activities. The spokesperson may be the water system's Public Information Officer (PIO), a manager assigned to communication, or someone within the communication network, such as a local public health department representative. The spokesperson is someone in authority who is honest, credible, competent, accessible, and sensitive to public concerns. Use the Spokesperson Assessment Tool.

The spokesperson must be ready to interpret scientific and technical information into clear language and must understand the water system's operations. Professional training in media management, effective listening, and handling sensitive situations is helpful in preparing a spokesperson to be ready to meet the media and the public at any time.

Integrate Communication into Emergency Response and SOPs

SOPs must be clear and allow users to take actions based on the information they will have at the time. SOPs should establish clear chains of command and communication so that authorized personnel can make situation-specific decisions. SOPs may include the following:

- **Purpose:** Objective of the SOP (e.g., delineation of authority, roles, and procedures).
- **Scope:** People involved, and the authority and responsibilities they have.

Notes

- **Communication Structure:** Organizational chart that demonstrates levels of command and communication linkages.
- **Protocols:** Procedures for action within the SOP's purpose.
- **Training:** Requirement(s) and schedule.
- **Exercising:** Procedures and schedule.
- **Oversight/Update:** Person(s) responsible for assuring compliance with and maintenance of SOP.

Customer Call Center

Call centers and customer service (CS) staff are on the front lines during an advisory. Call centers must have the resources to respond to customers above and beyond normal operations and hours. Information provided through the call center must be accurate, timely, and consistent.

The actions described below apply to local government call lines such as 411, community lines such as 211, or other agencies that may respond to an advisory.

- **Briefings:** Meet with call center and CS staff before issuing the advisory and provide essential information on the scope, scale, and severity of the advisory.
- **Scripts:** Provide scripts to call center and CS staff developed with essential information and frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- **Updates:** Meet with call center and CS staff to check for adequate staffing and customer concerns. Add and revise information in scripts as needed.
- **Resources:** Ensure enough phone lines and staff for the scope and scale of the advisory. Staff will need current information and referral contacts.
- **Debriefing:** Include call center and CS staff in the advisory debriefing to identify communication activities and resources.

Tip

Fill out Toolbox templates before an advisory and incorporate and regularly review and update them in your communication, ERP, and operations SOPs.

Considerations for Call Centers and Customer Service

Address potential call center issues in advisory protocols. Considerations include:

- *Are there enough phone lines?*
- *Are other phone lines available if they are needed?*
- *Are off-site phone lines or call centers available?*
- *Is there a backup plan if phone lines are not available or power is out during an emergency response?*
- *Are there enough people to staff the call center 24/7, if needed?*

Collaborating with Partners

Identify Partners

Partners are simply any organization or agency that can help you plan, develop, and distribute messages. Having a network of agencies and organizations can help advisories to be more effective and timely.
To identify partners, start with public agencies, especially those focused on local public health. Agencies and organizations to consider include the following:

- Drinking water primacy agency.
- Local and state public health departments.
- Consecutive, wholesale, and neighboring water systems.
- Critical and priority customers, including hospitals and businesses.
- Emergency management, public works, public safety, social services, and other government agencies.
- Community organizations.

See the Critical Customer Checklist for more information.

Table 1 provides examples of target audiences and partner organizations and agencies.

Key Questions for Collaboration with Partners

- *Who needs to know?*
- *Who is responsible for coordinating communication?*
- *Who makes decisions related to advisories?*
- *Who needs specific types of information, including technical information?*
- *What are the procedures to inform public officials?*
- *What are partners' capacities for outreach?*

Table 1: Examples of Target Audiences and Organizations for Drinking Water Advisory Communications and Potential Agencies for Assisting with This Communication

Communication Target	Examples	Potential Agency for Communicating with Target Group
Businesses	Business community, including hotels	**Local:** Economic development coordinator, chamber of commerce
Childcare	Licensed childcare providers	**Local:** Local public health department and childcare facilities
		State: Health and welfare (e.g., human services, social services, etc.)
Correction facilities	Local or regional jail	**Local:** Sheriff's office, chief of police
		State: Department of corrections
Food facilities	Restaurants, grocery stores, catering services, event venues (e.g., fairs, sports facilities), bakeries, canneries, dairies, food production facilities, ice manufacturers, meat processing facilities, etc.	**Local:** Local public health department
		State: Health department, agriculture and consumer services
Health care facilities	Hospitals, clinics, emergency care facilities, nursing homes, physician offices, pharmacies, dialysis centers	**Local:** Local public health department
Schools	Public schools, private schools	**Local:** School superintendent, local public health department
Susceptible populations	Elderly, infants, young children, persons with limited literacy or English skills, disabled persons, persons living in poverty	**Local:** Public health department, social services, community organizations

Public Health: A Key Partner

Developing a working relationship with local and state public health authorities can help water systems identify community organizations, develop specific messages and materials, and work through issues like translation. Working with the public health officer can put the risk of illness into perspective for public outreach.

Public health departments at the local, regional, and/or state levels work with susceptible populations and critical customers such as:

- Hospitals and medical facilities.
- Health care providers (HCPs), physicians, pharmacists, home health nurses.
- People who are elderly, low income, and homebound.
- Schools and childcare providers.
- Pregnant women and parents of young children.
- Food establishments.

Include public health departments in planning and discussions about advisories. Since in many cases they license these establishments, they can help with notifying these groups and developing specific messages. This allows water systems to focus on their core responsibilities. Local public health can assist with outreach through contact lists, websites, and newsletters.

See **Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet**.

Planning before an advisory is crucial to understanding the capacity of local public health departments to participate in a communication network. Formalized agreements, such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU), will clearly define capacity and responsibilities for both the health department and the water system.

Public health codes may have different requirements for the various types of establishments that prepare or process food, such as restaurants, community kitchens, grocery stores, and cafeterias. Knowing these codes for each locality will help water systems work with critical customers.

For more information about public health and outreach, refer to the guidance for the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR). See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Safe Drinking Water Act**.

Public Health Capacity

Capacity is the ability to respond to a situation with resources such as staff, materials, and expertise. Local, regional, and state public health departments vary greatly in their ability to support activities around drinking water advisories.

Public Health and Critical Customers

Local public health departments often license food establishments and childcare facilities. They are good resources for contact information.

Record Contact Information

Collect and record the contact information of each partner in a list or database. Include name, phone numbers, postal and e-mail addresses, after-hours contact information, and social media information. (The **Information for Communication Planning** and **Point of Contact Template** will help with this activity.) Be sure to verify and update all contact information on a regularly scheduled basis.

Did you know?

Many health departments still use faxes as a way to quickly notify hospitals, doctor's offices, and other health facilities. Consult with your local health department about using this method during an advisory.

Develop a Communication Network

Water systems generally are responsible for issuing advisories. However, timely, effective, and extensive outreach simply cannot be done by one entity. Water systems must work collaboratively with public health and other partners to get the job done effectively.

Some communities have an established communication network, usually coordinated around emergency management. If there is a communication network in your community, learn how to become a part of it. If there is no such network, develop one.

Tip

Copy and laminate the contact list or database. Keep one copy for work and one for the field and update them regularly

Collaborations for Reaching Susceptible Populations

A key element of effective communication planning is to consider populations that can be defined as a group with common characteristics that make them a susceptible population. For a drinking water advisory, water systems and public health agencies need to communicate with three specific susceptible populations:

1. Persons with communication needs, including low literacy levels, limited English proficiency, cognitive disabilities, and hearing or vision impairments.

2. Persons with medical needs that make them sensitive to water quality issues, such as babies, young children, pregnant women, and people who are immunocompromised, elderly, or on dialysis.

3. Persons with low income or who may lack the resources to act on information in a drinking water advisory or the awareness of a possible threat to their health and their family's well-being.

For more information, see the **Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet**.

Tip

Include smartphone PINs with contact information to permit direct communication if e-mail systems are down.

Communication Network

Advance collaboration, communication, and cooperation with other public agencies and private organizations before an actual event provides the opportunity to:

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

Figure 3 shows how creating a local network can extend an agency's outreach capacity.

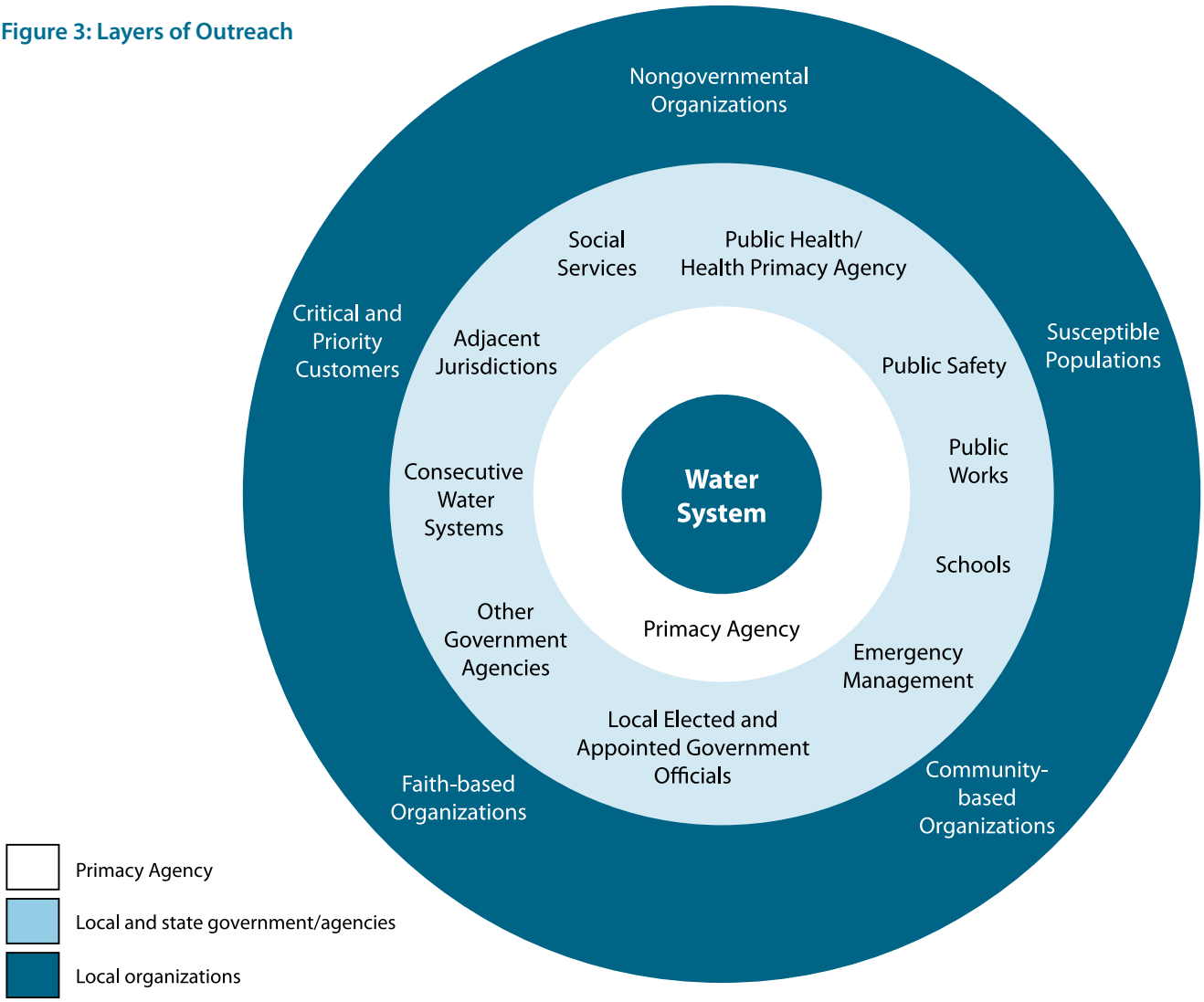
What is a Network?

Network refers to the ways organizations work together to address problems they cannot solve on their own.

Tip

Local and state agencies can help facilitate outreach to community organizations and susceptible populations.

Figure 3: Layers of Outreach



Meet and Discuss Protocols and Resources

Schedule a meeting with partners to discuss how collaboration can improve drinking water advisory communication. Determine where and when you will meet and for how long. Set a brief agenda that includes communication protocols within the network and resources (translation services, other contact information, websites) that are available for message distribution.

Plan and Conduct Regular Communication

Keep partners engaged through regular communication within the network. Send copies of meeting notes. At least four times a year, send e-mails or make phone calls to ask partners about:

- Additional information they may want to know;
- Their suggestions for activities, such as participating in an exercise; and
- Other organizations that can be invited into the network.

Plan meetings to address other issues that network members may have in common.

Notes

Developing a Message

Collaborate with Your Communication Network

Drinking water advisories are issued in response to a specific event or situation. Communication materials can be prepared in advance by collaborating with your partners. The Essential Information list outlines the questions and information that a drinking water advisory must address.

Message Development

Tools and templates that can help guide pre-event message development include:

- Worksheets:
  - » Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet
  - » Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet
  - » Message Mapping Template
  - » Sample Message Map
- Q&As and fact sheets:
  - » Q&As and Fact Sheets— Advisory Advice
  - » Quick Reference Facts
  - » Comprehensive List of Q&As For Boil Water Advisories
  - » Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory (English)
  - » Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory (Spanish)
  - » Frequently Asked Questions About Coliforms and Drinking Water
  - » Frequently Asked Questions About Groundwater Rule Advisories
  - » Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory (English)
  - » Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory (Spanish)
  - » Point of Contact for Coordination During an Advisory

Basic background information about the water system can be captured in the Water System Information Worksheet.

What's a Message?

Information a specific audience MOST needs or wants to know.

Essential Information

- ☐ *Who you are*
- ☐ *What action customers should take*
- ☐ *What event occurred and a description of the problem*
- ☐ *Where it occurred*
- ☐ *When it occurred*
- ☐ *Expected duration*
- ☐ *Why it happened*
- ☐ *Who is affected*
- ☐ *Basic information on the water system*
- ☐ *Current actions being taken*
- ☐ *Requested agency responses*
- ☐ *What public notice is required when appropriate*
- ☐ *Where to get more information*

Health Literacy

Health literacy is the ability to receive, understand, and act on basic health information needed to make good decisions. Nine out of 10 people in the United States have limited health literacy— regardless of their education levels. Since advisories require customers to understand a message and take action, health literacy is an important factor for messages and materials.

A first step to ensuring that your advisory can be easily understood by most audiences is to check the readability and grade level of the advisory content. For a general audience, the grade level should be between 5th and 8th grades. Word-processing programs can provide information about a document's readability. If you are not sure how to check for readability, go to the "Help" section on your word-processing program and search for the term "readability."

For more information on health literacy guidelines, see **Appendix B: Online Resources, Health Literacy**.

Translate and Format Messages

Advisories need to be translated to reach many customers. Consult with local government to identify the main languages in the service area. Public health departments are a very good resource. Many states and local governments have programs and resources specifically for translation, including sign language and Braille.

Other strategies include partnering with community-based organizations or contracting with a translation service. The EPA **Revised Public Notification Handbook** and **Consumer Confidence Reports** guidance have key phrases translated. The **Washington Department of Health** has advisory content translated into several languages.

Community organizations provide a direct, trusted link to diverse populations. Incorporate their skills and outreach strategies into advance planning for preparing and distributing advisories. Many community organizations have language and sign language translation services. Use these or professional translation services. Avoid using online dictionaries or other computer software to translate messages.

Community organizations can also format messages in forms that are accessible to people who are blind or have low vision, who need pictures or images to understand the message, or who need text or Video Relay Services (video phone) messages.

Writing Messages

Provide the public with a clear concise advisory by:

- *Limiting messages*
- *Using simple, clear language*
- *Providing supporting information*
- *Maintaining consistent messages*

What is Readability?

Readability is a general scale that measures comprehension, or how understandable the text is in a document.

Conducting Exercises

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Current federal policy requires state and local governments, including water systems, to follow the National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS training includes information about Incident Command System (ICS) operations, including communication protocols and procedures. ICS provides an organizational structure for sharing information among involved agencies and distributing information to the public.

For more information about NIMS in the Water Sector and ICS, see Appendix B: Online Resources, National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Plan Exercises

Preparation for a drinking water advisory entails the consideration of a range of situations relevant to the water system and its community so that:

- Pertinent information is compiled and evaluated to support sound decisions.
- Credibility with customers is maintained through coordination with state and local agencies.
- Public outreach is effective.

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) provides a standardized methodology and terminology for exercise design implementation and evaluation. For more information, see Appendix B: Online Resources, Exercise Planning and Preparedness.

It is not possible to plan for every contingency. Water systems, public health, emergency management, and other public agencies can select a set of situations in which they can define roles and responsibilities, appropriate outreach strategies, and SOPs. For a list of some possible scenarios, see Appendix B: Online Resources, Exercise Planning and Preparedness.

Notes

Conduct Exercises

A communication network for issuing drinking water advisories must be tested in advance to determine if it works and where gaps in outreach remain. Testing the network can prevent illness and even save lives during a real drinking water advisory event. Exercises are one way to test the network.

- Seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises, games, drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises are terms for various types of practice sessions based on a scenario. A scenario could include developing messages and testing the dissemination of an advisory.
- Larger events can include other agencies and can evaluate collaboration.
- Exercises can be scaled to the size of an advisory and to community needs.

Exercise Plan

Numerous resources and opportunities exist for exercises. While most of these resources are associated with preparedness and security, they can be used for the full range of advisories. All-hazards planning can incorporate advisory scenarios. After action reports, comments, and observations are used to revise communication and operations protocols.

Exercise Basics

Exercises come in many sizes and creating them can seem complex. Water systems have multiple opportunities for exercises. Both small exercises limited to the water system or water sector and larger drills and exercises at the community and state level are important in community planning. These exercises help water systems connect with public health, emergency management, and other sectors to build relationships and networks in preparation for advisories.

Exercise resources in this Toolbox give some basic tools for water systems to create and conduct their own drinking water advisory exercises. These exercises can be scaled for water system staff and other partners, such as public health. See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Exercise Planning and Preparedness**.

- **Design a scenario:** Scenarios can be based on an actual advisory or can test a new protocol. The scenario should unfold in stages; participants act on one decision point or action before moving to the next.

Did You Know?

Exercises can be for one water system or multiple systems and partners.

Tip

For small- scale exercises, see the **Exercise Planning Template** *in Section 1 and* **Debriefing Ground Rules**, **Modifying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**, *and the* **Debriefing Discussion Guide** *in section 3.*

- **Organizing the exercise:** In-house exercises should be part of staff training or water quality meetings. Planning committees for water system or multiple agency exercises can assist in organizing exercises. See **Exercise Planning Template**.
- **Conducting the exercise:** The exercise should be facilitated. Collect the observations and comments of both the evaluators and the participants.

Debrief and Incorporate Changes into Protocols

Immediately after an exercise, debrief with participants to go over what went well and what needs to improve. Comments and results from the exercise and debriefing are analyzed. Some debriefings plan next steps and how to move forward. Exercise evaluation results are used to identify opportunities to improve advisory communication. Use the information to update both contacts and protocols.

When Planning an Exercise:

- ☐ *Consider a range of events and scenarios.*
- ☐ *Evaluate the network under both normal and challenging operating conditions.*
- ☐ *Plan for issuing drinking water advisories during*
  - » *a power outage,*
  - » *different seasons, times of the day, and days of the week.*
- ☐ *Evaluate the exercise.*
- ☐ *Incorporate improvements.*

Tip

The following "After an Event" tools can be used for debriefings and exercises:

Corrective Action Tracking Form, **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Updates**, **Follow-Up Memo**, *and* **Debriefing Evaluation *Form***.

Tools & Templates: Before an Event— Preparing for an Advisory

- Information for Communication Planning
- Point of Contact for Notification of an Advisory
- Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet
- Message Mapping Template
- Sample Message Map
- Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet
- Spokesperson Assessment Tool
- Critical Customer Checklist
- Point of Contact Template
- Q&As and Fact Sheets— Advisory Advice
- Quick Reference Facts
- Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories
- Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory
- Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory (Spanish)
- Frequently Asked Questions About Coliforms and Drinking Water
- Frequently Asked Questions About Groundwater Rule Advisories
- Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory
- Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory (Spanish)
- Point of Contact for Coordination During an Advisory
- Water System Information Worksheet
- Exercise Planning Template

Information for Communication Planning

PURPOSE

This template helps guide the development of communication standard operating procedures (SOPs) for an advisory. Adapt this form for specific situations.

DIRECTIONS

Complete the information and include it in emergency response plans (ERPs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Give this form to partners and organizations in the advisory communication network and have a copy of the water system version. When each partner completes the form, compile them into one SOP and schedule regular updates.

PARTNER NAME _____

Point of Contact for Communication Planning

Name: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Communication Plan Update Procedures

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise Procedures and Schedule

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Point of Contact for Notification of an Advisory

Primary Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

1st Alternate Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

2nd Alternate Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

3rd Alternate Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

Point of Contact for Notification of an Advisory, continued

Standard Notification Procedures

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Special Notification Procedures (e.g., Outbreak, Do Not Use)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Actions After Notification

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Partner and Network Information Distribution

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet

PURPOSE

Advisories and risk communication plans must consider the needs of specific populations who may be sensitive to water quality issues or who have communication barriers, such as limited English proficiency or limited vision.

The advisory network is critical for reaching these populations. Regulations and public expectations for outreach require collaboration with public health departments, other local agencies, including schools, and community organizations.

DIRECTIONS

Use the contact list or database to identify, list, and note contacts for public health, local government agencies, and community organizations to help with outreach to susceptible populations.

- *Complete this form with public health, local agencies, and community partners.*
- *Include responsibilities and a time frame for developing materials and taking actions. Review the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) Guidance (see* **Appendix B: Online Resources, Susceptible Populations** *).*
- *Include completed contact lists in emergency response plans (ERPs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs).*
- *Adapt them to reflect specific needs in a community. Some strategies may work for several populations. Include a schedule for updates. Add identified facilities to the water system's critical customer list.*

Low Literacy

- ☐ Encourage television news stations to announce advisory and contact phone numbers in addition to posting them on screen. Follow up with press releases.
- ☐ Use radio to distribute information. Radio is a key accessible source of information.
- ☐ Identify and coordinate with local organizations that serve low literacy populations and can help disseminate drinking water advisories in appropriate formats.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet, continued

Limited English Proficiency

- ☐ Identify languages widely spoken in the area. See www.mla.org/map or www.census.gov.
- ☐ Determine local government and agency translation services and providers.
- ☐ Consider contracting for professional translation services.
- ☐ Work with public health, local government, and schools to identify, coordinate, and contract with skilled translators in the community.
- ☐ Use ethnic media outlets.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Blind or Visually Impaired

- ☐ Work with social services and local government to identify organizations and communication options that serve people who are blind or visually impaired. Consider how a boil water advisory could be tailored for this audience.
- ☐ Use radio to distribute information. Radio is a key accessible source of information.
- ☐ Encourage television stations to announce advisories and contact numbers.
- ☐ Identify formats and tools to make written materials and web pages accessible for this audience.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet, continued

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- ☐ Coordinate with local government, schools, and other agencies on policies for interpretation and resources.
- ☐ Encourage television news stations to broadcast all drinking water advisory information in open caption format and in their on-screen scrolls.
- ☐ Identify, coordinate, and contract with a sign language interpreter for news conferences in public forums and other events.
- ☐ Use automated messages in text and e-mail formats. They are a good method of distribution for this audience.
- ☐ Check with water system and local government on capacity to handle calls through Video Relay Service.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

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_____

Older Adults and Frail Elderly

- ☐ Work with public health, local government agencies, and community organizations to identify nursing homes, agencies, and organizations that assist older adults to help disseminate drinking water advisory information.
- ☐ Design messages with a clear alternative to boiling water. Boiling water may not be an option for this population.
- ☐ Identify resources, such as home health care, to help older adults and the elderly with support services during an emergency.
- ☐ Add meal delivery services, such as Meals on Wheels, to critical customer lists.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet, continued

Children

- ☐ Identify and coordinate with local health departments, school districts, pediatrician offices and clinics, and other agencies to disseminate drinking water advisory information.
- ☐ Target materials and messages to parents and teachers. Visual cues, such as posters or covering water fountains, will assist this group.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

Pregnant Women

- ☐ Identify and coordinate with local health departments, health clinics, hospitals, other health care facilities, obstetrician offices, and schools to disseminate drinking water advisory information relevant to pregnant women.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

Physically and Mentally Impaired

- ☐ Work with public health and local government agencies to identify community organizations, such as independent living facilities and home health care, that assist people with physical and mental impairments to help disseminate drinking water advisories.
- ☐ Consider targeting messages both to care providers and to individuals.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet, continued

Homeless

- ☐ Identify locations where drinking water advisories can be posted (e.g., libraries, shelters, soup kitchens).
- ☐ Add homeless shelters and meal centers/food banks to critical customer lists.
- ☐ Design messages with a clear alternative to boiling water. Boiling water may not be an option for this population.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

People with Compromised Immune Systems

- ☐ Work with the local public health department to identify and coordinate with medical facilities, health care providers and organizations that serve people with compromised immune systems to disseminate drinking water advisories.
- ☐ Design messages with a clear alternative to boiling water. Boiling water may not be an option for this population.
- ☐ List resources, specific messages, and materials needed to communicate with this population group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

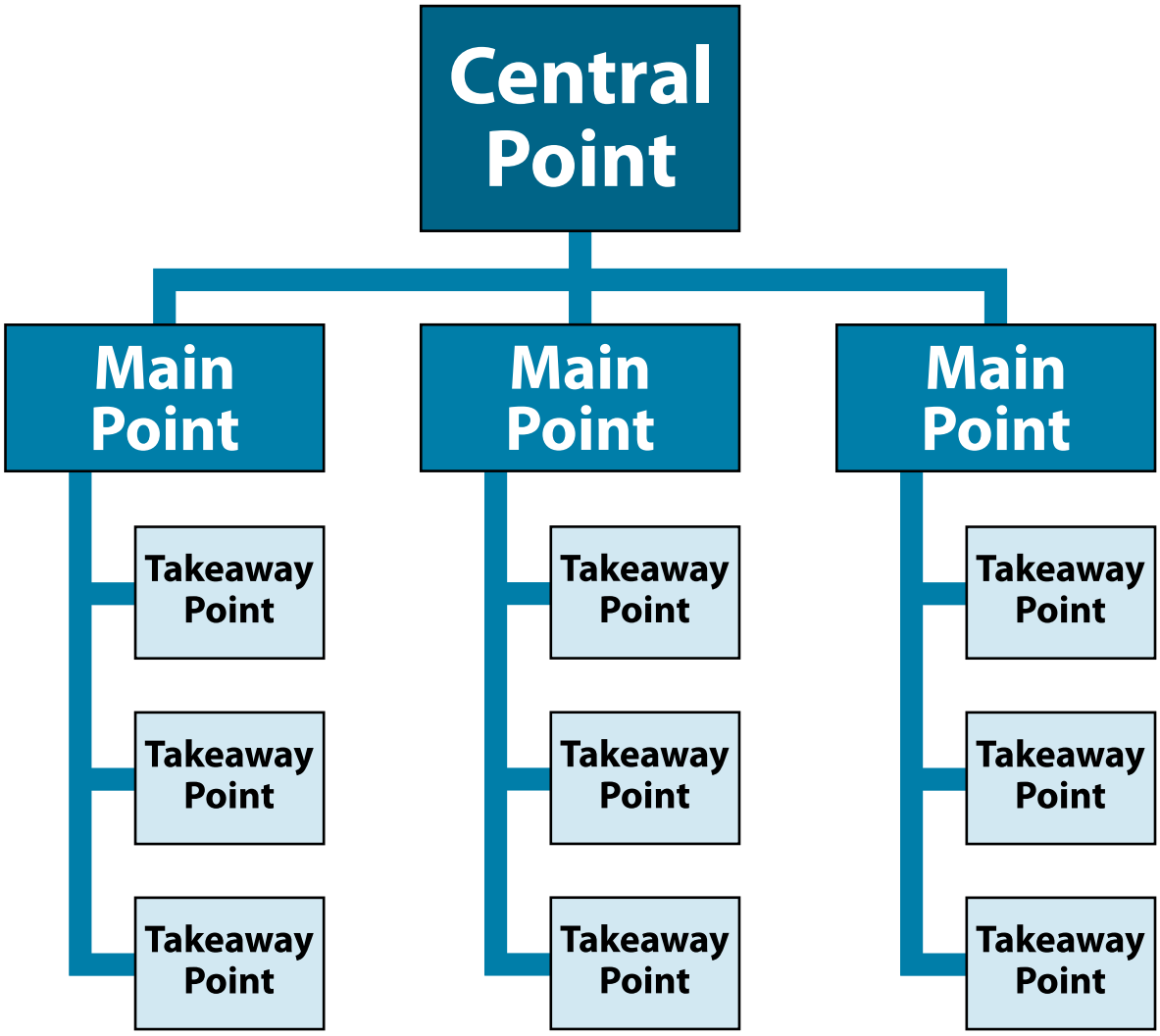
Message Mapping Template

PURPOSE

A message map is one tool to help identify messages and key information. Use this map for planning and complete with communication network partners. Adapt as necessary.

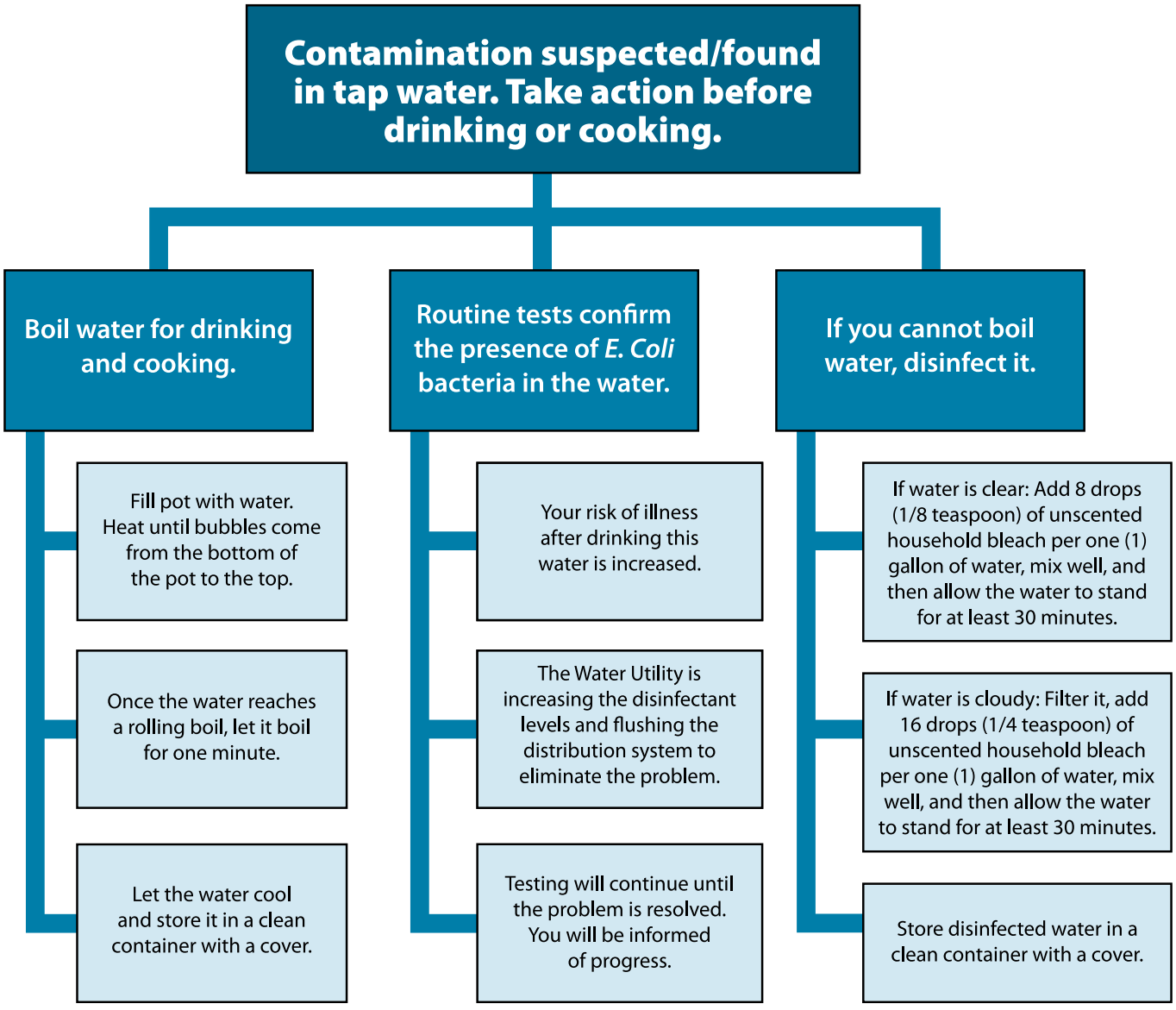
DIRECTIONS

Think about the specific actions people will need to take and information they will need to know during an advisory. Fill in each section of the map. Create maps for specific situations and audiences. Use the results to develop advisory materials and communication messages.



Sample Message Map

This is an example of a completed Boil Water Advisory message map.



Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet

PURPOSE

Advisories need a clear, consistent message. The SOCO (Single Overriding Communication Objective) Worksheet is a tool to create a specific message. Use the message developed in the SOCO Worksheet for all communication with the public and partners, including briefings and press releases. The point of contact information identifies the communication contact for the advisory. The SOCO approach applies to any water system communication.

DIRECTIONS

Work with water system staff and partners to complete the SOCO Worksheet. Use the best available information. First, think about the reason for the advisory and the actions needed. Next, answer each question. Use the results to develop all communication. As the situation changes, use this worksheet to update the message.

Key Message: Provides Meaning and Context

In one brief paragraph, state the key point or objective you want to communicate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Key Facts

What are the three most important facts you need an individual to understand about the Drinking Water Advisory?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Target Audience

Who is the main audience or population segment you would like this message to reach?
Who is the secondary audience?

Primary Audience: _____

Secondary Audience: _____

Tertiary Audience: _____

Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet, cont'd

Communication Objective:

What is the one message or action someone needs to understand?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Primary Contact

Who in your office/organization is the primary point of contact?

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Date and time available: _____

For more information on SOCO, See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Risk Communication**.

Spokesperson Assessment Tool

PURPOSE

This checklist is a guide to identifying a spokesperson for planning protocols or during advisories.

DIRECTIONS

Complete this form for each candidate.

Spokesperson Assessment	
Candidate:	
QUALIFICATIONS	**MEETS**
Level 1— BASIC	
Has authority to speak for the water system or other agency	
Is credible with the media and public	
Is adaptable and a quick study	
Is knowledgeable about the event, effects, and actions	
Level 2— INTERMEDIATE	
Communicates technical information in terms the media can understand	
Is flexible while staying on message during media questions	
Handles pressure well	
Level 3— ADVANCED	
Has media or communication training/experience	
Is responsive to difficult or sensitive questions	
Accepts constructive advice	
Knows when to speak and when to defer to another	
Reflects the tone appropriate for audience and event	
Other Factors to be Considered	
Has expertise related to event	
Understands severity of the crisis	
Working with media would not conflict with management responsibilities	

Comments:

Critical Customer Checklist

PURPOSE

This sample checklist reflects customers that should receive priority notification by phone, fax, e-mail, or Short Message Service (SMS) during a drinking water advisory, in addition to any other customer notification systems. This list can also serve as a basis for identifying partners to participate in the communication network.

DIRECTIONS

- ☐ *Use this checklist to review current standard operating procedures (SOPs) and critical customer information in the customer service database.*
- ☐ *Identify these facilities in the community and incorporate the information into SOPs.*
- ☐ *Work with partners to prioritize lists in individual service areas. The health department may already have lists and contacts.*
- ☐ *Work with partners and assign contact responsibilities.*

Tier 1 Critical Customers

- ☐ Food processing facilities
- ☐ Health care facilities such as hospitals, clinics, dialysis centers, and other medical facilities
- ☐ Jails
- ☐ Nursing homes
- ☐ Schools
- ☐ Special needs customers [some water systems have options for special needs customers to self-identify to receive priority alerts]

Tier 2 Critical Customers

- ☐ Airports
- ☐ Arenas, stadiums, and other large venues
- ☐ Colleges and universities
- ☐ High-volume customers
- ☐ Hotels
- ☐ Ice production

This list balances customers in the community with critical needs and a water system's ability to maintain correct records and make timely notification when an advisory occurs. Key information fields for critical customers include the following:

1. Facility/business name
2. Primary point of contact (e.g. CEO, Environmental Health Officer, etc.)
3. Contact e-mail
4. Contact phone
5. Contact cell phone
6. Secondary point of contact
7. Secondary contact e-mail
8. Secondary contact phone
9. Secondary contact cell phone
10. Physical location of structures of concern

Point of Contact Template

PURPOSE

This is a template to organize partner and network contacts for an advisory.

DIRECTIONS

Complete the information for water system and network partners. Distribute completed information to all. Embed a schedule to update information regularly. Adapt this template to reflect each water system's partners and communication network. Add smartphone personal identification number (PIN) if available.

Organization	Order	Name	Title	Office Phone (Including Ext.)	Cell Phone	24/7 Phone	E-mail	Address	Smart-phone PIN
	Primary								
	1st Alternate								
	2nd Alternate								
	Primary								
	1st Alternate								
	2nd Alternate								
	Primary								
	1st Alternate								
	2nd Alternate								
	Primary								
	1st Alternate								
	2nd Alternate								
	Primary								
	1st Alternate								
	2nd Alternate								
	Primary								
	1st Alternate								
	2nd Alternate								

Q&As and Fact Sheets— Advisory Advice

PURPOSE

These fact sheets address common customer questions for drinking water advisories, including boil water advisories. The information on pages 52–57 was developed from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), water system, and primacy agency materials, such as fact sheets and guidance. The content was adapted to help water systems provide customers with clear and concise information and actions to take.

Water systems are encouraged to use this information to create their own communication materials. Recommendations may vary depending on the circumstances and severity of water contamination. Use the fact sheets in conjunction with the **Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories** *on pages 52–57. Select specific questions for each advisory situation.*

This information is for Tier 1 Public Notices. For a waterborne disease outbreak, consult with local and state public health authorities to adapt the information.

DIRECTIONS

- *Brackets [ ] indicate places to insert specific information, such as the water system name, health department information, or the contaminant.*
- *Limit fact sheets for customers to one page front and back.*
- *Spanish versions are available for selected Q&As on pages 61–63 and 70–71.*
- *Refer to the fact sheets on pages 51–76 for additional topics.*

Uses include:

- *Briefing materials for public health departments and other partners*
- *Media kits and updates*
- *Customer fact sheets*
- *Websites and widgets*

Quick Reference Facts

PURPOSE:

This is an easy-to-use, quick reference tool for customers.

DIRECTIONS:

Use this information in fact sheets and on websites; adapt as necessary to suit the type of advisory (e.g., Boil Water, Do Not Drink, Do Not Use) and primacy agency guidance. Be sure to provide links to additional information or guidance.

Example of Quick Tips for a Boil Water Advisory

Use Tap Water for:	Use Boiled Water for:	Use Caution:
• *Washing clothes (unless the water is cloudy)* • *Taking showers (for adults and older children)* • *Flushing toilets*	• *Drinking* • *Brushing teeth* • *Washing fruits and vegetables* • *Preparing food* • *Mixing baby formula* • *Making ice* • *Giving water to pets*	• *Most kitchen and other household water filters do not remove bacteria or viruses* • *Coffee makers, vending machines, and soda dispensers with a line to the water supply* • *Bathing babies and young children (give sponge bath; use boiled water that has cooled)*

Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories

PURPOSE

This list includes questions most often asked during boil water advisories. This information was developed from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), water system, and primacy agency materials. The content was adapted to help water systems provide customers with clear and concise information and actions to take.

Water systems are encouraged to use this information as a guide to help create their own fact sheets and other communication materials. Recommendations may vary depending on the circumstances and severity of water contamination. Select specific questions that are appropriate for each advisory situation.

This information is for Tier 1 Public Notices. For a waterborne disease outbreak, consult with local and state public health authorities to adapt the information.

DIRECTIONS

- *Brackets [ ] indicate places to insert specific information, such as the water system name, health department information, or the contaminant.*
- *Limit fact sheets for customers to one page front and back.*
- *Refer to the fact sheets from the "Tools and Templates" in Section 1 and Section 2 of this toolbox for additional topics.*

Use the Q&As to develop scripts or fact sheets for water system staff, especially customer service and field crews. Uses include

- Briefing materials for public health departments and other partners.
- Media kits and updates.
- Customer fact sheets.
- Websites and widgets.

Boiling Water

How do I boil my water during an advisory?

- Fill a pot with water.
- Heat the water until bubbles come from the bottom of the pot to the top.
- Once the water reaches a rolling boil, let it boil for 1 minute.
- Turn off the heat source and let the water cool.
- Pour water into a clean container with a cover for storage

Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories, continued

Why do I have to boil my water?

Your water [may be, is] contaminated by [bacteria, virus, protozoa, parasite]. Contamination [may be, is] due to [equipment failure, leaking/broken pipes in the system, insufficient disinfectant in the water supply]. The Boil Water Advisory gives you information so you can take action to protect your health.

I cannot boil my water. How do I disinfect my water to make it safe to drink?

(Caution: Water contaminated with fuel or a toxic chemical will not be made safe by boiling or disinfection. Use another source of water if you know or suspect that water might be contaminated with fuel or a toxic chemical.)

If tap water is clear:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent).
- Add 1/8 teaspoon (8 drops or about 0.75 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in a clean contain with a cover.

If tap water is cloudy:

- Filter through a clean cloth
- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent).
- Add 1/4 teaspoon (16 drops or 1.5 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in a clean container with a cover.

Remember that containers may need to be sanitized before using them to store safe water:

To sanitize containers:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent).
- Make a sanitizing solution by mixing 1 teaspoon (5 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach in 1 quart (32 ounces, 4 cups, or about 1 liter) of water.
- Pour this sanitizing solution into a clean storage container and shake well, making sure that the solution coats the entire inside of the container.

Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories, continued

- Let the clean storage container sit at least 30 seconds, and then pour the solution out of the container.
- Let the empty container air dry OR rinse it with clean water that has already been made safe, if available.

Never mix bleach with ammonia or other cleaners. Open windows and doors to get fresh air when you use bleach.

Should I use bottled water?

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

I don't like the taste of boiled water. What can I do?

To improve the taste of boiled water you can:

- Pour cooled boiled water back and forth from one clean glass or container into another to add air to the water, or
- Let the water stand for a few hours, or
- Add a pinch of salt to each quart of boiled water.

Food and Beverages

Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, or water or soda dispenser?

Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water lines. This includes the water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer. Most kitchen and other household water filters typically do not remove or kill all bacteria or viruses.

- Use boiled or bottled water to make coffee and ice.
- Most kitchen and other household water filters typically do not remove or kill all bacteria or viruses.
- When the boil water advisory is lifted, consult the owner's manual to find out how to sanitize appliances.

Can I use ice from my refrigerator/freezer ?

- Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers.
- Throw out all ice made with tap water.
- Make new ice with boiled or bottled water.

Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories, continued

What should I do about preparing food and beverages? How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces?

- Wash fruits and vegetables with boiled water that has cooled or bottled water.
- Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute before adding food to cook.
- Use boiled water when preparing drinks, such as coffee, tea, and lemonade.
- Wash food preparation surfaces with boiled water.

What should I do about feeding my baby?

Breastfeeding is best. Continue to breastfeed. If breastfeeding is not an option:

- Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible.
- Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled water. Use boiled water if you do not have bottled water. Disinfect water for baby formula if you cannot boil your water (see above for directions on how to use bleach to disinfect water).
- Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples before use.
- If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

How do I wash dishes during a Boil Water Advisory?

Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150°F or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.

To wash dishes by hand:

- Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
- In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid bleach for each gallon of warm water.
- Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least 1 minute.
- Let the dishes air dry completely.

Health

I already drank the water. Will I get sick?

Most people who happen to drink this water will not get sick. If you do get sick, the symptoms are similar to food poisoning: nausea, diarrhea, cramps, and possibly a mild fever.

Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories, continued

What should I do if I have symptoms?

The most important thing to do is avoid dehydration. Drink plenty of fluids and avoid drinks with caffeine, such as soda, coffee, and tea. If you are concerned about your health or the health of a family member, contact your health care provider or [local health department].

Household Information

Should I give my pets boiled water?

Pets can get some of the same diseases as people. It is a good idea to give them boiled water that has been cooled.

Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g., reptiles, frogs)?

Most germs that infect people do not infect reptiles or fish. If your water system is using more chlorine or changing disinfection, be cautious about changing the water in your fish tank or aquarium. Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more advice.

Is it safe to water my garden and house plants?

You can use tap water for household plants and gardens.

What [microbe, organisms, germs, bacteria] might be in the water?

Many types of microbes could be in the water. Water systems are concerned about bacteria such as E. coli, viruses such as norovirus, and parasites such as (*Cryptosporidium*).

Human illness from these microbes is usually caused by eating raw or undercooked food, ingesting contaminated recreational or other untreated water, or poor hand-washing. Diarrheal illness from these microbes is not usually life threatening, except in the elderly, the very young, or those with weak immune systems. If you are concerned, consult your health care provider or contact [local health department].

Hygiene

Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?

No. Do not use untreated tap water to brush your teeth. Use boiled or bottled 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. Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

Comprehensive List of Q&As for Boil Water Advisories, continued

What about shaving?

Yes, you can shave as usual.

What about doing laundry?

Yes, it is safe to do laundry as usual.

Where can I get more information?

- **Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water:** CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.
- **Hygiene and Handwashing:** CDC provides guidance on alternative hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.
- **A Guide to Water Filters:** CDC maintains a guide for filters that remove *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia*.
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- **Consumer Information:** EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.
- Water system: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- State or local public health department: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- Primacy Agency: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]

Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory

Boiling water

To boil water

- Fill a pot with water.
- Heat the water until bubbles come from the bottom of the pot to the top.
- Once the water reaches a rolling boil, let it boil for 1 minute.
- Turn off the heat source and let the water cool.
- Pour the water into a clean container with a cover for storage.

Disinfecting water

If you are unable to boil your water, disinfect it instead.

If tap water is clear:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent).
- Add 1/8 teaspoon (8 drops or about 0.75 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in clean container with a cover.

If tap water is cloudy:

- Filter water using clean cloth.
- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent).
- Add 1/4 teaspoon (16 drops or 1.5 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
- Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.
- Store disinfected water in clean container with a cover.

Remember that containers may need to be sanitized before using them to store safe water.

To sanitize containers:

- Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent).
- Make a sanitizing solution by mixing 1 teaspoon (5 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach in 1 quart (32 ounces, 4 cups, or about 1 liter) of water.
- Pour this sanitizing solution into a clean storage container and shake well, making sure that the solution coats the entire inside of the container.

Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory, continued

- Let the clean storage container sit at least 30 seconds, and then pour the solution out of the container.
- Let empty container air dry OR rinse it with clean water that has already been made safe, if available.

Never mix bleach with ammonia or other cleaners. Open windows and doors to get fresh air when you use bleach.

Water filters

Boil tap water even if it is filtered. Most kitchen and other household water filters typically ***do not*** remove bacteria or viruses.

Preparing and cooking food

- Wash all fruits and vegetables with boiled water that has cooled or bottled water.
- Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute before adding food to cook.
- Use boiled water when preparing drinks, such as coffee, tea, and lemonade
- Wash food preparation surfaces with boiled water.

Feeding babies and using formula

Breastfeeding is best. Continue to breastfeed. If breastfeeding is not an option:

- Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible.
- Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled water. Use boiled water if you do not have bottled water. Disinfect water for baby formula if you cannot boil your water (see above for directions on how to use bleach to disinfect water).
- Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples before use.
- If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

Ice

- Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers.
- Throw out all ice made with tap water.
- Make new ice with boiled or bottled water.

Bathing and showering

Be careful not to swallow any water when bathing or showering.

Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

Fact Sheet About What to Do During a Boil Water Advisory, continued

Brushing teeth

Brush teeth with boiled or bottled water. Do not use untreated tap water.

Washing dishes

Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150 degrees or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle.

To wash dishes by hand:

- Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
- In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid bleach for each gallon of warm water.
- Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least one minute.
- Let the dishes air dry completely.

Laundry

It is safe to do laundry as usual.

Pets

Pets can get some of the same diseases as people. It is a good idea to give them boiled water that has been cooled.

For more information, see or contact:

- **Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water:** CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.
- **Hygiene and Handwashing:** CDC provides guidance on alternative hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.
- **A Guide to Water Filters:** CDC maintains a guide for filters that remove *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia*.
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- **Consumer Information:** EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.
- Water system: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- State or local public health department: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- Primacy Agency: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]

Hoja informativa sobre qué hacer durante una advertencia para hervir el agua

Hervir el agua

Para hervir el agua

- Llene una olla con agua fría.
- Caliente el agua hasta que se formen burbujas desde el fondo de la olla.
- Una vez que el agua llegue a hervir con fuerza, deje que hierva así durante un minuto.
- Apague la fuente de calor y deje que el agua se enfríe.
- Para guardar el agua, vacíela en un recipiente limpio que tenga tapa.

Para desinfectar el agua

Si no hay forma de hervir el agua, desinféctela en vez de hervirla.

Si el agua de la llave está transparente:

- Use blanqueador de cloro al que no se le haya añadido aromatizante (como olor a limón).
- Agregue 1/8 de cucharadita (8 gotas o aproximadamente 0.75 mililitros) de blanqueador de cloro para uso doméstico a 1 galón (16 tazas) de agua.
- Mezcle bien y espere 30 minutos o más antes de beber el agua.
- Guarde el agua desinfectada en un recipiente limpio que tenga tapa.

Si el agua de la llave está turbia:

- Filtre el agua con un trapo limpio.
- Use blanqueador de cloro al que no se le haya añadido aromatizante (como olor a limón).
- Agregue 1/4 de cucharadita (16 gotas o aproximadamente 1.5 mililitros) de blanqueador de cloro para uso doméstico a 1 galón (16 tazas) de agua.
- Mezcle bien y espere 30 minutos o más antes de beber el agua.
- Guarde el agua desinfectada en un recipiente limpio que tenga tapa.

Recuerde que es posible que deba desinfectar los envases antes de usarlos para almacenar agua adecuada para beber.

Para desinfectar los envases:

- Use blanqueador de cloro al que no se le haya añadido aromatizante (como olor a limón).

Hoja informativa sobre qué hacer durante una advertencia para hervir el agua, continuación

- Agregue 1 cucharadita (64 gotas o 5 mililitros) de blanqueador de cloro para uso doméstico a 1 cuarto de galón (32 oz, 4 tazas, o aproximadamente 1 litro) de agua.
- Ponga esta solución en un envase limpio y agite bien, asegurándose de que la solución haga contacto con todo el interior del envase.
- Deje esta solución en el envase por lo menos durante 30 segundos, y luego vacíe el envase.
- Deje que el envase se seque al aire o enjuáguelo con agua que ya haya desinfectado, si es que la tiene.

Nunca mezcle blanqueador de cloro con amoniaco o con algún otro tipo de producto de limpieza. Abra las ventanas y las puertas cuando use blanqueador de cloro para que entre el aire fresco.

Filtros para el agua

Hierva el agua de la llave, incluso si está filtrada. Los filtros de agua **no** eliminan las bacterias ni los virus.

Preparación de alimentos

- Lave todas las frutas y las verduras con agua hervida.
- Deje hervir bien el agua durante un minuto antes de agregarle los alimentos.
- Prepare bebidas como café, té o limonada con agua hervida.

Alimentación de bebés y uso de leche preparada para lactantes

Lo mejor es amamantar. Continúe amamantando al bebé. Si amamantar no es posible:

- De ser posible use leche preparada para lactantes ya lista para usarse.
- Use agua embotellada para preparar leche para lactantes en polvo o concentrada. Si no tiene agua embotellada, use agua hervida. Si no puede hervir el agua, desinfecte el agua que usará para la leche preparada para lactantes siguiendo las instrucciones mencionadas anteriormente sobre la forma de usar blanqueador).
- Recuerde que debe esterilizar las botellas y los chupones antes de usarlos.
- Si no puede esterilizar las botellas, trate de usar botellas listas para usar y no reciclables (que se puedan usar solo una vez).

Hielo

- No use hielo del fabricador de cubitos de hielo ni del recipiente de hielo del congelador.
- Deseche todo el hielo que haya hecho con agua de la llave.
- Haga hielo nuevo con agua hervida o embotellada.

Hoja informativa sobre qué hacer durante una advertencia para hervir el agua, continuación

Limpieza del cuerpo

Debe tener cuidado de no tragar agua al bañarse en la tina o la regadera.

Tenga cuidado al bañar a bebés y a niños pequeños. Considere darles baños de esponja para evitar que traguen agua.

Lavado de dientes

Para lavarse los dientes use agua hervida o embotellada.

Para lavar los trastes

Se puede usar el lavador de platos sin problemas si el agua llega a una temperatura de por lo menos 160 grados, o si el lavador de platos tiene un ciclo de sanitación.

Para lavar los trastes a mano:

- Lave y enjuague los trastes como lo hace normalmente, pero con agua caliente.
- En otra pileta, agregue 1 cucharadita de cloro para uso doméstico, sin aromatizante, por cada galón de agua tibia.
- Remoje los trastes ya enjuagados en el agua con cloro por lo menos durante un minuto.
- Deje que los trastes se sequen por completo al aire.

Lavandería

Puede lavar la ropa sin problemas de la forma en que acostumbra a hacerlo.

Mascotas caseras

Las mascotas caseras sufren de las mismas enfermedades que los humanos. Es una buena idea darles agua hervida para tomar.

Para obtener más información, comuníquese con:

- Preparación personal y almacenamiento de agua segura: Los CDC ofrecen una guía acerca de la cantidad de agua necesaria para la buena salud, así como la forma de preparar y almacenar el agua segura antes y durante una emergencia.
- Higiene y lavado de manos: Los CDC ofrecen una guía acerca métodos de higiene alternativos cuando no hay agua disponible o está contaminada.

Hoja informativa sobre qué hacer durante una advertencia para hervir el agua, continuación

- **Una guía sobre los filtros de agua:** Los CDC tienen una guía de los filtros que eliminan el *criptosporidio* o la *giardia*.
- Línea gratuita sobre agua potable segura de la EPA: 1-800-426-4791
- **Información para el consumidor:** La Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) ofrece información sobre la calidad del agua potable, emergencias, contaminantes, problemas de salud pública, y tratamiento y almacenamiento.
- Sistemas de agua: [nombre, título, teléfono, correo electrónico, sitio web]
- Departamento de salud pública local o estatal: [nombre, título, teléfono, correo electrónico, sitio web]
- Agencia principal responsable de la implementación de la Ley de Agua Potable Segura: [nombre, título, teléfono, correo electrónico, sitio web]

Frequently Asked Questions About Coliforms and Drinking Water

What are coliforms?

Coliforms are a group of bacteria found in plant material, water, and soil. Coliforms are also present in the digestive tracts and feces of humans and animals. Most of the time, these bacteria are not harmful.

Why does a water system test for coliforms?

Water systems test for indicators such as total coliforms, fecal coliforms, or *E. coli* to monitor water quality. If the water system has a positive test for one of these indicators, it can mean recent contamination with soil or human feces.

What does a positive coliform test result mean?

A positive coliform test means possible contamination and a risk of waterborne disease. A positive test for total coliforms always requires more tests for fecal coliforms or *E. coli.* A confirmed positive test for fecal coliforms or *E. coli* means you need to take action as advised by your water system.

Will coliform bacteria make me sick?

Most coliform bacteria are a normal part of the environment. They do not cause disease but do indicate the water might be contaminated by soil or feces. Some rare types of coliforms, such as *E. coli* O157:H7, can cause serious illness. Although most *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks are from eating raw or undercooked food, cases from contaminated drinking water can occur, but are rare.

Why test for indicator organisms?

A biological pathogen is any organism, such as a bacteria, virus, protozoa, or parasite, that causes a disease. Biological pathogens are commonly called "germs." There are many different possible pathogens. It is not possible to test for every type of pathogen in every water sample, so water systems use indicators instead.

Water systems test for indicator organisms, like coliforms, to check for possible contamination by biological pathogens. Most coliforms are not harmful, but they come from the same sources as other bacteria and organisms that could make you sick.

Frequently Asked Questions About Coliforms and Drinking Water, cont'd

What are "indicator" organisms?

- Indicator organisms come from the same sources as organisms that make you sick. Indicator organisms are easier to identify, are present in larger numbers, and respond to water treatment the same way as harmful bacteria and many other biological pathogens. A biological pathogen is any organism, such as a bacteria, virus, protozoa, or parasite, that causes a disease. Biological pathogens are commonly called "germs".
- **Total coliforms** is another term for the full group of coliforms. They are indicators of possible water contamination.
- **Fecal coliforms** are one type of coliform bacteria that is found found mainly in animal digestive tracts and feces. Fecal coliforms are a more specific indicator of fecal contamination of water.
- ***E. coli (Escherichia coli)*** is a species of fecal coliform bacteria. *E. coli* almost always comes from animal feces. *E. coli* is considered the best indicator of fecal water contamination. If *E. coli* is present, harmful bacteria or other pathogens may also be present.

For more information see or contact:

- **Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water:** CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.
- **Hygiene and Handwashing:** CDC provides guidance on alternative hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.
- **A Guide to Water Filters:** CDC maintains a guide for filters that remove *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia*.
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- **Consumer Information:** EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.
- Water system: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- State or local public health department: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- Primacy Agency: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]

Frequently Asked Questions About Groundwater Rule Advisories

We've never had a drinking water advisory before. Why are we having one now?

Your water system uses groundwater [wells, aquifer]. Groundwater has different standards than water from other sources like rivers or streams. Your water system now has to comply with new requirements, known as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Groundwater Rule.

What's different about the Groundwater Rule?

We used to think that groundwater was protected from fecal contamination. New information shows that groundwater can have fecal contamination and people could get sick. This is why EPA developed the Groundwater Rule.

What indicator organisms does a groundwater system test for?

Groundwater systems test for one of three indicator organisms—*E. coli*, enterococci, or coliphages—to monitor water quality. If the water system has a positive test for any one of these three organisms, it can mean recent contamination with human feces.

Water systems test for indicator organisms to check for possible contamination. There are many different possible pathogens. It is not possible to test for every pathogen in every water sample, so they test for indicators instead.

What are "indicator" organisms?

Indicator organisms come from the same sources as organisms that might make you sick. Indicator organisms are easier to identify, are present in larger numbers, and respond to water treatment in the same way as harmful bacteria and many other biological pathogens. A biological pathogen is any organism, such as a bacteria, virus, protozoa, or parasite that causes disease. Biological pathogens are commonly called "germs."

What does a positive test result for an indicator organism mean?

A positive test for an indicator means possible water contamination and a risk of waterborne disease. A positive test in groundwater for *E. coli*, enterococci, or coliphages means you and your water system need to take action.

Will indicator organisms make me sick?

Coliphages do not infect humans or cause illness. Some enterococci can cause disease in humans. Most coliform bacteria are a normal part of the environment and do not cause disease. However, some rare types of *E. coli*, such as O157:H7, can cause serious illness. Although most *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks are from eating raw or undercooked food, cases from contaminated drinking water can occur, but are rare.

What are coliphages?

A virus that infects bacteria is called a phage. Phages infect specific species of bacteria. Coliphages infect coliform bacteria. Coliphages do not infect humans or cause illness. A positive test for coliphages indicates the water may be contaminated with feces or *E. coli*.

Frequently Asked Questions About Groundwater Rule Advisories, cont'd

What are coliforms?

Coliforms are a group of bacteria found in plant material, water, and soil. Coliforms are also present in the digestive tracts and feces of humans and animals. Most of the time, these bacteria are not harmful.

Total coliforms is another term for the full group of coliforms. They are indicators of possible water contamination. Fecal coliforms is one type of coliform bacteria found mainly in animal digestive tracts and feces. Fecal coliform tests are a more specific indicator of water contamination. *E. coli* is a species of fecal coliform bacteria. *E. coli* almost always comes from animal feces and is considered the best indicator of fecal water contamination. If *E. coli* is present, harmful bacteria or other pathogens may also be present

What is *E. coli*?

E. coli (Escherichia coli) is a species of fecal coliform bacteria. *E. coli* almost always comes from animal feces. E. coli is considered the best indicator of fecal water contamination. If *E. coli* is present, harmful bacteria or other pathogens may also be present. Not all E. coli make people sick. Some rare types of *E. coli*, such as O157:H7, can cause serious illness.

What are Enterococci?

Enterococci are a type of bacteria mainly found in the gut and feces of animals. They are used as an indicator organism for groundwater because they closely link water quality with contamination by human feces. Some enterococci can cause disease in humans. Enterococci are not coliform bacteria.

For more information see or contact:

- **Personal Preparation and Storage of Safe Water:** CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.
- **Hygiene and Handwashing:** CDC provides guidance on alternative hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.
- **A Guide to Water Filters:** CDC maintains a guide for filters that remove *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia*.
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- **Consumer Information:** EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.
- Water system: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- State or local public health department: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
- Primacy Agency: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]

Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory

When I turn on the faucet, the water sputters. Why?

You have air in your lines. Turn on your tap slowly and run the water until the sputtering stops.

The water is discolored. What should I do?

Flush water pipes by running the water until it is clear.

Do not wash clothes if the water is discolored. Wait until the water runs clear at the tap. Wash a load of dark clothes first.

Why does my water have a strong smell?

The smell is probably chlorine. Often, water systems will increase chlorine levels to disinfect the pipes.

What should I do if my water pressure is low?

Check the faucet screens for trapped particles. Remove the screens and clean out any particles. Put the screens back on the faucet.

Do I need to clean out my faucets?

Yes. You should flush your faucets after the drinking water advisory.

- Turn on the main water valve.
- Turn on the cold water tap at all faucets and run the water until you feel a change in temperature (i.e. the water gets noticeably colder). This may take several minutes. Begin with the faucet that is highest up in your home or building and then open the other faucets one at a time moving from the highest floor to the lowest.

Do I need to clean appliances?

Yes. Read the owner's manual for directions to clean appliances such as water softeners and filter units.

Frequently Asked Questions About What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory, continued

My refrigerator has a water dispenser/ice maker. Do I need to clean them?

Yes. Water dispensers and ice makers are connected to your water line. You need to flush and clean them.

Follow the directions in the owner's manual or:

- Change the filter cartridges.
- Throw out ice.
- Flush the water dispenser for 3 to 5 minutes.
- Run the ice maker for 1 hour.
- Throw out all the ice.
- Wash and sanitize bin areas.

Do I need to do something for the water softener?

Yes. You may need to run through a regeneration cycle. Follow the directions in the owner's manual.

I have a water treatment unit for the house. Does it need special care?

Yes. Change the filter cartridges. Some units need disinfecting. Follow the directions in the unit's owner's manual.

Preguntas frecuentes acerca de qué hacer después de una advertencia para hervir el agua

Cuando abro una llave de agua, ésta salpica, ¿por qué?

Hay aire en las tuberías de agua. Abra la llave de agua lentamente y deje correr el agua hasta que deje de salpicar.

El agua está turbia, ¿qué debo hacer?

Deje abiertas las llaves de agua hasta que el agua salga transparente.

No lave ropa si el agua está turbia. Espere a que salga el agua transparente del grifo de agua. Primero lave una carga de ropa obscura.

¿Por qué huele muy fuerte el agua que sale del grifo?

El olor es probablemente cloro. Con frecuencia los sistemas de agua aumentan los niveles de cloro para desinfectar las tuberías.

¿Qué debo hacer si la presión de agua es baja?

Revise si hay desperdicios atrapados en las mallas que están en la salida de las llaves de agua. Saque estas mallas y límpielas bien. Vuelva a colocar las mallas en las llaves de agua.

¿Debo limpiar mis llaves de agua?

Sí; abra las llaves de agua que no haya usado durante la advertencia para hervir el agua potable.

- Abra la toma de agua principal.
- Abra la llave de agua fría en todos los grifos usados para obtener agua de beber en el hogar y deje correr el agua hasta que cambie de temperatura (por ejemplo que se sienta más fría). Esto puede tardar varios minutos. Empiece con el grifo más elevado de su casa o edificio y luego abra los otros grifos uno por uno en orden del piso más alto al piso más bajo.

Preguntas frecuentes acerca de qué hacer después de una advertencia para hervir el agua

Mi refrigerador tiene surtidor de agua fría y fabricador automático de cubitos de hielo, ¿debo limpiarlos?

Sí; los surtidores de agua fría y los fabricadores de cubitos de hielo están conectados a su tubería de agua. Debe desinfectarlos. Siga las instrucciones del manual del usuario o:

- Cambie los cartuchos de filtro.
- Tire el hielo.
- Deje correr el agua en el surtidor, de tres a cinco minutos.
- Deje funcionar el fabricador automático de cubitos de hielo por una hora.
- Deseche los cubitos de hielo.
- Lave y desinfecte los recipientes de agua y hielo.

¿Debo hacer algo con el suavizador de agua?

Sí; es posible que deba hacerlo funcionar durante todo un ciclo de regeneración. Siga las instrucciones del manual del usuario.

Tengo un sistema de tratamiento de agua para el hogar. ¿Necesito hacer algo en especial?

Sí. Cambie los cartuchos de filtro. Algunas unidades deben ser desinfectadas. Siga las instrucciones del manual del usuario.

Point of Contact for Coordination During an Advisory

Primary Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

1st Alternate Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

2nd Alternate Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

3rd Alternate Contact: _____

Title: _____

Office Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____

24/7 Contact: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Smartphone PIN number: _____

Point of Contact for Coordination During an Advisory, continued

Standard Procedures for Coordination After Initial Notification

Criteria Used to Characterize Severity of Event and Guide Level of Response

Actions Upon Notification

Water System Information Worksheet

PURPOSE

Partners, government agencies, or other audiences may not know much about their water systems. This sheet can be used as a quick reference for those involved in an advisory by providing background information, basic water system information, and facts about the advisory. Sharing this document with everyone involved will help keep information consistent.

DIRECTIONS

Complete this sheet with specific information about the water system. Provide it to consecutive, wholesale, and neighboring water systems involved in an advisory. Place the completed form in your water system's emergency response plans and standard operating procedures. Also be sure to provide it to local public health departments, local government agencies, and community partners.

[Water System] Background Information

Number of service connections: _____

Number of people affected by this event: _____

Source water [surface water, groundwater, name of reservoir or river, etc.]:_____

_____

Population served: _____

_____

Type of disinfection [free chlorine, chloramine]:_____

_____

Boundaries of service area [describe and use map if available]: _____

_____

_____

Consecutive, wholesale, and neighboring water systems (if applicable): _____

_____

_____

Water System Information Worksheet, continued

Agency Contacts Name, Title	Address, City, State, ZIP	Office Phone	24/7 contact	Cell Phone	E-mail	Smartphone PIN	Notes
Water System Contact							
Water System Public Information Officer/ Communication							
Primacy Agency Contact							

Exercise Planning Template

PURPOSE

This form is designed to facilitate planning for exercises. The first section will help state objectives and desired outcomes from the planning session. The second section identifies participants and helps prepare them for discussion. The more preparation, the better the end product.

DIRECTIONS

- *Identify exercise leads and type of exercise (seminar, workshop, tabletop, game, drill, functional, full scale).*
- *Complete the purpose, scope, goal, and objectives. Invite staff and other organizations as appropriate.*
- *Include name and contact information for each participant.*
- *Identify and assign specific materials for participants to develop or provide.*

Step 1: Exercise Planning/Identification of Desired Outcomes

Planning meeting date/ time/ duration:
Exercise lead: Name Title Agency Phone E-mail
Exercise title and proposed date(s):
Exercise type:
Exercise purpose and scope:

Exercise Planning Template, continued

Exercise goal:
Exercise objectives / desired outcomes:

Step 2: Exercise Planning/Identification of Participant Roles/Responsibilities

Planning meeting date/ time/ duration:		
Exercise lead: Name Title Agency Phone E-mail		
Water System Departments	**Participants**	**Date and Materials**
Partner Organizations	**Participants**	**Date and Materials**

Section 2: During an Event— Issuing an Advisory

- Overview
- Checklist: During an Event
- Initiating an Advisory
- Preparing an Advisory
- Distributing an Advisory
- Ending an Advisory
- Tools and Templates: During an event— Issuing an advisory

Overview

A drinking water advisory can occur at any time. Water systems must act quickly when an event is suspected or identified. The first action must be to assess the situation and follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) for issuing a drinking water advisory.

Icon Key

Tools and Templates

Resources

Tip

Water systems as well as state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies can pull out the Tools and Templates in Sections 1 and 2 to use as a "Go Kit" in situations where pre-planning activities may have been incomplete.

This section contains the essential strategies and activities necessary to create public awareness of a drinking water advisory event or to issue a Boil Water, Do Not Drink, Do Not Use, or a precautionary advisory for the general public, including susceptible populations who may have communication barriers or medical needs.

Checklist: During an Event

Initiating an Advisory

- ☐ Identify the situation and collect facts.
- ☐ Notify your drinking water primacy agency.
- ☐ Decide to issue an advisory.
- ☐ Identify the geographic boundaries.
- ☐ Notify your internal staff and external partners.

Preparing an Advisory

- ☐ Develop, format, and translate the message.
- ☐ Approve the advisory.
- ☐ Identify the spokespersons.
- ☐ Assign communication responsibilities.

Distributing an Advisory

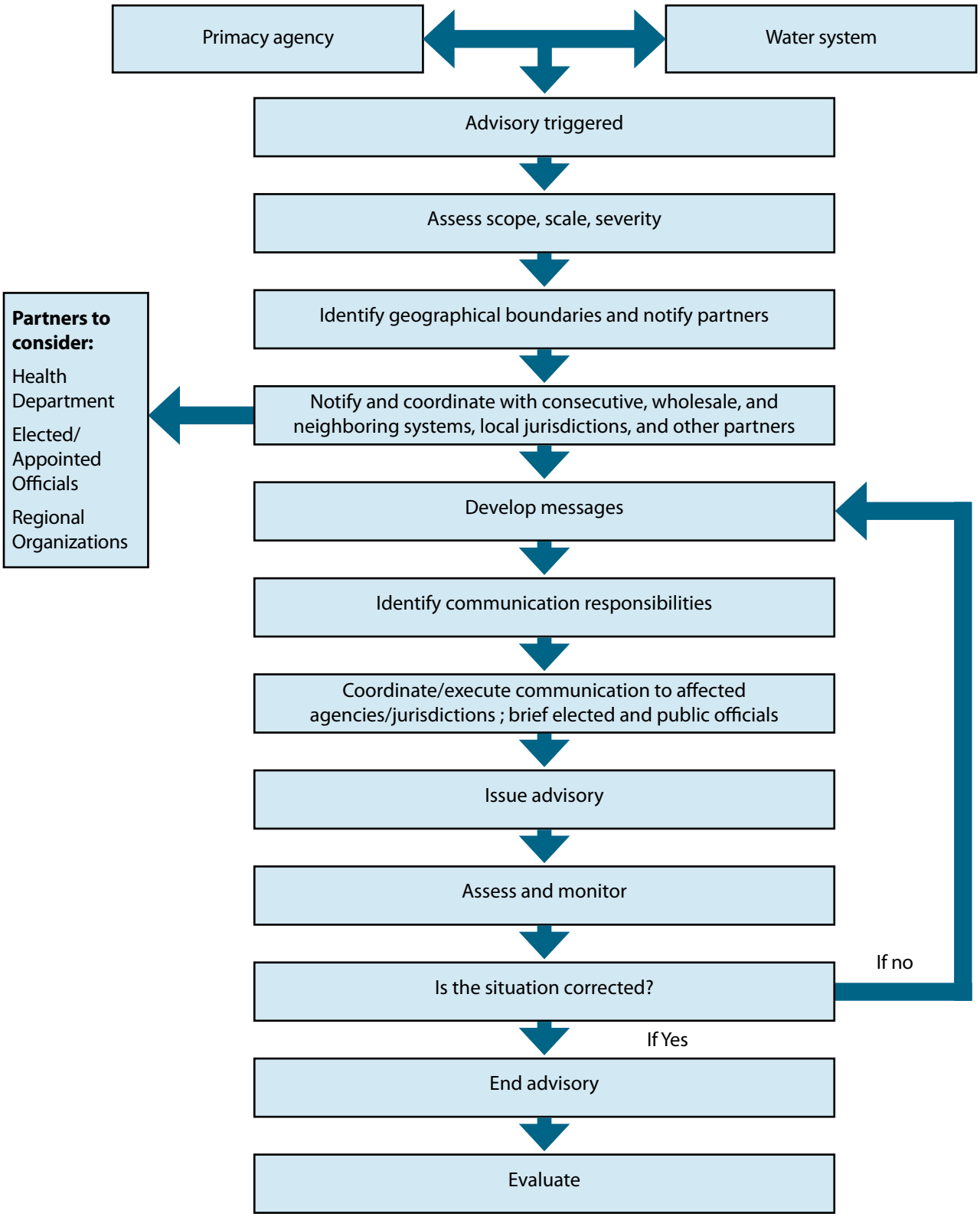
- ☐ Brief elected and public officials.
- ☐ Implement your communication platforms.
- ☐ Use your communication network to expand distribution of the advisory.
- ☐ Work with the media.

Ending an Advisory

- ☐ Issue End of Advisory notice.

Notes

Figure 4: Issuing a Drinking Water Advisory Flow Chart



Initiating an Advisory

Identify the Situation and Collect Facts

Drinking water advisories are issued for reasons identified in federal or state regulations or by decisions made by the water system. The situation and characteristics of the contaminant(s) of concern determine what type of advisory to distribute:

- Informational
- Boil Water
- Do Not Drink
- Do Not Use

Use the *Essential Information* list to collect data and develop communication materials.

Notify Your Drinking Water Primacy Agency

Each state that has primacy specifies particular mechanisms for state notification. Be familiar with your water system's protocols for notifying your primacy agency. See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Primacy Agency**.

Decide to Issue an Advisory

Work with senior management and follow your communication SOP in making the decision to issue an advisory. Use your best professional judgment.

Essential Information

- ☐ *Who you are*
- ☐ *What action customers should take*
- ☐ *What event occurred and a description of the problem*
- ☐ *Where it occurred*
- ☐ *When it occurred*
- ☐ *Expected duration*
- ☐ *Why it happened*
- ☐ *Who is affected*
- ☐ *Basic information on the water system*
- ☐ *Current actions being taken*
- ☐ *Requested agency responses*
- ☐ *What public notice is required when appropriate*
- ☐ *Where to get more information*

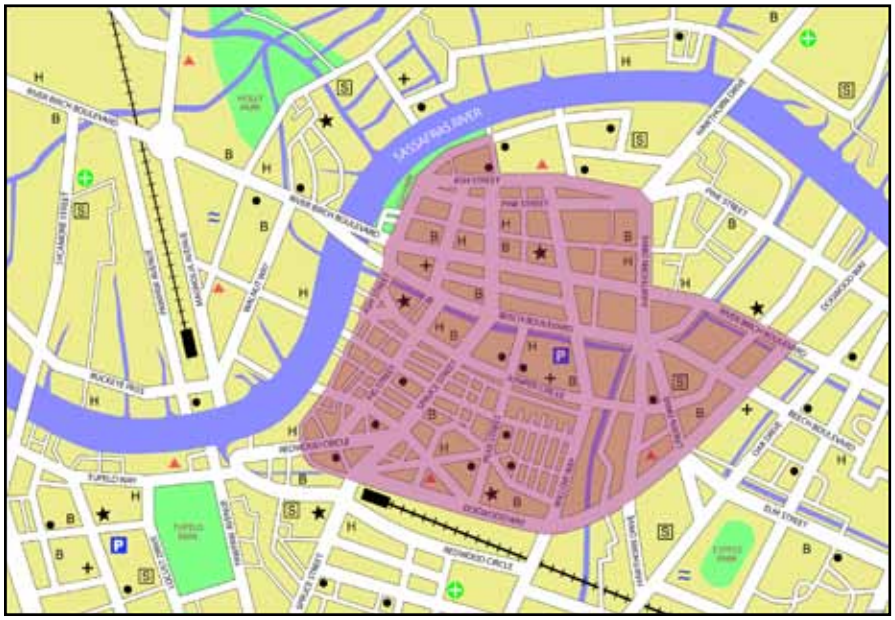
Identify the Geographic Boundaries

Boundaries

A key component of a drinking water advisory is to communicate clearly the area affected. Many customers do not know which water system provides their service and broadcast media usually reach a large audience beyond the affected area.

Clearly describe the boundaries of the affected area using street names, place names, and well known reference points.

Figure 5: Example of a Simple Map to Designate an Area Affected by a Drinking Water Advisory



Maps

Maps help illustrate the affected area. Water systems can generate maps using internal or online mapping tools (e.g., geographic information system [GIS]). These maps can be posted on agency websites, or distributed electronically or as printed material. Update the map as the situation changes.

Maps Help Define The Area Affected

When possible, use maps and brief descriptions of the boundaries of the area affected. Maintain and update maps of the water service area. Maps can be sent out as printed or electronic versions. Make sure the maps

- *Are presented at a legible scale with legible fonts.*
- *Are uncluttered.*
- *Reflect commonplace names and reference points.*
- *Have crisp lines.*
- *Are easy to read.*

Descriptions

Clearly communicating the boundaries of affected areas also requires careful consideration of verbal descriptions so that spokespersons, radio, and other media can briefly but accurately depict the service area affected.

Notify Your Internal Staff and External Partners

Activate your internal communication SOP. Use information collected to brief staff. Depending on the situation, also brief your partners:

- Wholesale, consecutive, and neighboring water systems.
- Public health department.
- Critical customers (see Critical Customer Checklist to assist in identifying at-risk populations served by a water system).
- Public officials.
- Emergency management.
- Community organizations.
- Businesses, childcare facilities, correctional facilities, food service, health care providers and facilities, and schools.

Provide Call Center Data Checklist to call center or customer service staff and partners.

Notes

Preparing an Advisory

Develop, Format, and Translate the Message

Use the information gathered in identifying the situation to develop the message. Use tools, such as the Message Mapping Template and the Sample Message Map and the Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet.

Unless a state requires specific templates, revise the order and content of these templates based on the local circumstances. Remember to include the 10 required elements from the Public Notification Rule.

Understand the translation needs of your community. Use community partners or professional translation services to translate the message. Avoid using online dictionaries or other computer software.

Community partners are responsible for producing the message in formats that people they serve can read and understand, such as Braille, large font, or text messages.

Required Elements of a Public Notice

All public notices must include a clear and readily understandable explanation of each violation containing the following 10 elements from EPA's Public Notification Rule (PNR) Quick Reference Guide.

1. Description of the violation or situation, including contaminant(s) of concern and the contaminant level(s).
2. When the violation or situation occurred.
3. Any potential adverse health effects from drinking the water and standard language regarding the violation or situation.
4. Population at risk, including subpopulations that may be particularly vulnerable if exposed to the contaminant in their drinking water.
5. Whether alternate water supplies should be used.
6. Actions consumers should take, including when they should seek medical help, if known.
7. What the water system is doing to correct the violation or situation.
8. When the water system expects to return to compliance or resolve the situation.
9. Name, business address, and phone number of the water system owner, operator, or designee who can provide additional information concerning the notice.
10. A statement encouraging the notice recipients to share the notice with other persons, where applicable.

Did You Know?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **Public Notification Rule (PNR) Quick Reference Guide** *is a good reference for the required elements of the Public Notification Rule*

Abbreviated Messages

Some channels of communication only allow for brief messages because of time or space constraints. Brief messages are appropriate for:

- On-screen scroll (local televised news, cable television, public service television channels, Emergency Broadcast System announcements).
- Text message systems (SMS).
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter).
- Reverse 911 phone message systems.
- Highway variable message signs and portable message boards.

See the **Automated Messages** tool.

Abbreviated Message Template— Boil Water Advisory

The [water utility name] is asking customers to boil tap water or use bottled water. For more information, go to [www.watersystemwebsite.org] or call [###-###-####].

Message Development

The information on which to base the advisory can be captured in the **Information for Communication Planning** tool. The **Required Elements of a Public Notice** (see page 86) outlines the questions and information the drinking water advisory must address in its materials. **Key Questions for the Public Information Officer** may help in preparation for working with the media.

Approve the Advisory

Once the message has been developed and produced in appropriate formats, follow your communication SOP to have management approve the advisory.

Identify the Spokespersons

The person to serve as a spokesperson during a drinking water advisory can come from water system management or from an outside partner agency, such as a public health department. The spokesperson should be someone in authority who is honest, credible, competent, accessible, and sensitive to public concerns.

Tip

Abbreviated messages should include:

- *Basic message of action to take*
- *Location*
- *Contact information*
- *Where to get more information*

Follow the communication protocols discussed in Section 1 and use essential information to prepare spokespersons for interacting with the public and media. See **Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement**.
If there is not a designated spokesperson, assess staff options and identify an individual to fill this role. See **Spokesperson Assessment Tool**.

Assign Communication Responsibilities

Exchanging information and developing materials, such as news releases, among partners and water systems must be a coordinated effort. Liaisons should be designated staff who are the communication link for issuing an advisory and also for updating and lifting the advisory. Each organization or water system involved in an advisory should identify a liaison.
Work with your partners to assign specific communication roles and responsibilities. Develop a list that identifies who (which partner) will be contacting whom (a specific audience) and when that contact will occur.

Tip

When possible, the spokesperson should not be someone who is directly involved in operations.

Tip

Before meeting the press, a spokesperson should rehearse key messages and the responses to anticipated questions. See **SOCO Worksheet**, **Message Mapping Template** *and* **Sample Message Map**.

Distributing an Advisory

Brief Elected and Public Officials

Brief the appropriate public officials on the essential information before you notify the media. Media often will contact public officials rather than a water system for information and comments.

Implement Your Communication Platforms

Determining the most appropriate strategies and tools for a particular situation is a reflection of the severity of the public health concern and the ability to define clearly the affected area. Effective communication will require distribution through multiple methods:

- News media outlets(are a primary means of distributing the advisory)
- Automated message systems (helps reach specific service areas quickly). See **Automated Messages** for more information.
- Door-to-door contact or door hangers (often used for small areas)
- Hand-delivered fliers
- Websites
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)

Automated Messages

Broadcast notification systems use a variety of commercially available systems that include:

- *Prerecorded or synthesized voices for brief messages,*
- *Text (SMS) for messages to cell phones, and*
- *E-mail for detailed messages to large groups.*

For more information, see ***Automated Messages***.

Use Your Communication Network to Expand Distribution of the Advisory

As noted in the Collaborating with Partners (see pages 23–28) portion of Section 1: Before an Event, network partners can assist with translating, formatting, and distributing messages to specific audiences.

- Coordinate with local public health departments to help alert hospitals, health care providers, childcare providers, and food service and preparation facilities (See Appendix B: Online Resources, Additional Water and Health Resources and Appendix B: Online Resources, Disinfecting Water).
- Coordinate with school districts and private schools, including colleges and universities.
- Use your communication network to reach diverse populations that may be outside mass media communication channels.

Communication Network

Local public health departments, government agencies, and community organizations are networks that can help communicate advisories. Access their expertise and communication resources when planning for and implementing advisories See **Communicating with Susceptible Populations Worksheet**.

Work with the Media

The Public Notification Rule requires wide distribution and encourages the use of mass media. General circulation newspapers, radio, television, websites, and ethnic media are good channels for issuing advisories.

See Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement, Working with the Media Template, Key Questions for the Public Information Officer, Media Alert Template, How to Use Press Release Templates, Tier 1 Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template, Significant Pressure Loss Advisory Press Release Template, and the Advisory Update Press Release Template for more information.

After issuing a press release, call media outlets to verify they received the release. Ask for the duty editor or news director. Take time to explain the importance of this information to the public. This is especially important for lifting an advisory.

Monitoring the media, customer calls, and the status of the advisory will guide decisions about the need for media activities. Press conferences, additional calls to reporters, or expanding media work to partners are necessary in large-scale advisories.

Media log

Use a log to track media contacts and reports. Logging media contacts gives a structure for follow up with updates or end-of-advisory notices. If the advisory includes multiple agencies or water systems, each organization should keep a log.

Tip

To meet the intent of the Public Notification Rule , health effects and other details must be included in the press release. Include phone numbers and websites in the full advisory. *See* **Required Elements of a Public Notice**

Did You Know?

Ethnic media reach 25 percent of the U.S. adult population. These adults are far more responsive to messages delivered by media from a similar culture or ethnic group. Forty-five percent of all African-American, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Arab-American adults prefer ethnic television, radio, or newspapers to mainstream media channels. *See* **Appendix B: Online Resources, Susceptible Populations.**

Working with the Media

- Get the facts straight. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Write the message to fit the circumstances.
- Keep all messages consistent.
- Edit, review, and get clearance for all media releases.
- **Use standard press release format.**
- Link to other information from relevant entities.
- Use e-mail, fax, and other methods to deliver the press release.
- Make follow-up calls to the media.
- Track contact with the media.
- Post the release and the advisory on the water system's website.
- Be honest with the media. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, then offer to find the information.
- Discuss use of maps and visual aids with media outlets.
- Consider issuing a joint press release with the state and/or local health department.
- Send a release announcing the end of the advisory to media outlets and partners and post the announcement on your website.
- Make follow-up contact with media to encourage publicizing the end of the advisory.
- If the advisory is large or long-term, consider scheduling regular press conferences to keep the media up to date. These should be at a time that allows the media to meet press deadlines.

Media Evaluation

Look at media coverage during and after an advisory:

- *Does media coverage reflect the scope and scale of the event?*
- *What is the tone of the coverage?*
- *What are the reactions in the community?*
- *Were updates covered by the media?*
- *How do the timing and placement of media stories link with the volume of customer service calls? (Look for the media's effect on customer questions.)*

Digital Media

Blogs and comments on websites DO NOT represent general public opinion. They DO give an idea of reactions and concerns.

Tier 1 PNR Compliant Press Releases

News editors will edit and reformat releases to fit their style and available space. Some of the required elements or language may be omitted. It is the water system's responsibility to post the official advisory in public places, apartments, schools, businesses, on websites, and other places as required by your state.

See the following tools and templates for guidance:

- How to Use Press Release Templates
- Tier 1 Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template
- Significant Pressure Loss Advisory Press Release Template
- Advisory Update Press Release Template
- Ending an Advisory Press Release Template

Press Conferences and Briefings

News conferences or briefings become necessary during some advisories. Press conferences and briefings create additional work and demand extra resources, but they can eliminate the need to answer large numbers of media inquiries individually. Preparation helps ensure a successful press event.

Planning a Press Conference

The first step is to refer to the messages and essential information developed for the advisory. These messages and information are the basis for media kits, advisories, and statements. Messages should be consistent in all communication.

Media kits are simply a collection of information to provide to the media. Media kits should have:

- A copy of the official advisory distributed to customers
- Copies of all the statements made by all participants
- Background information (See Water System Information Worksheet).

Notes

When planning a press conference, coordination with partners is absolutely required.

- Work with partners to plan the press conference, develop materials for media kits, and ensure appropriate clearance is obtained from each agency.
- Designate one person or group to organize the press conference and one person to act as the emcee. Emcee responsibilities include introducing speakers, managing the question and answer period, and closing the press conference.
- Identify a spokesperson for each organization participating in the press conference See **Spokesperson Assessment Tool**.
- Use the essential information and messages to develop statements for each speaker. Brief the spokespersons prior to the event and review messages and materials. Speakers need to know the order of their appearance and roles. See **Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement** and **Spokesperson Assessment Tool**.
- Rehearse before the session and practice statements and possible questions and answers. It is important to prepare for difficult questions. Plan a strategy in case the situation becomes contentious. Include all spokespersons if other agencies are involved. Phone calls can work if spokespersons cannot meet in-person ahead of time.
- Plan logistics. This is central to a successful press conference. Study the location. The space should be accessible and have enough room, no echo, a central focus point, and a designated sign-in area. Media kits should be provided at the sign-in area. If possible, set aside a separate space for one-on-one interviews. On-site press conferences are more of a challenge. Use tape or cones to designate a specific safe area. Limit work noise and activity, if possible. Make it clear how long the press conference will last.
- Announce the press conference through media contacts. Develop a media alert and distribute it by e-mail, fax, or other methods. Follow up with calls to the media to make sure the right persons received the advisory. Select a time that will allow sound and video crews to set up equipment and all media to meet press deadlines. Use the **Media Alert Template**.

Notes

Conducting a Press Conference

With the right planning in place, the press conference should go more smoothly. Make sure each media outlet signs in and has a media kit. Press conferences have a standard format:

- **Entrance:** Spokespeople enter the room or area in the order they are speaking.
- **Introductions:** The emcee gives a short summary of the reason for the press conference and introduces each spokesperson. One spokesperson may play this role if necessary.
- **Statement:** Spokespeople stand up, give their names and titles, and proceed with their statements.
- **Questions:** It is standard practice to have a question and answer session. The person doing the introductions should handle media questions and refer them to the best spokesperson for the topic.
- **Close:** Stick to the time allotted. The emcee thanks the media for their interest, states that the session is closed, and announces where to get more information and/or the time of the next update. Spokespersons leave the room.

After the Press Conference

If appropriate, the media can conduct one-on-one interviews directly after the press conference. Make sure to get back to any member of the media that asked for more information.

A debriefing, either in person or by phone, will identify concerns that are not addressed, determine changes needed in messages, and prepare participants for the next update. Information from a press debriefing should be incorporated into the advisory protocol during the evaluation process.

Notes

Ending an Advisory

Issue End of Advisory Notice

Federal regulations do not specify when to end an advisory. Water systems and drinking water primacy agencies consult with one another on the specific events around the advisory and use water quality criteria and protocols to make the decision to end or lift an advisory. State primacy agency criteria are typically based on laboratory testing (sampling) results.

When the water system and primacy agency end the advisory, communication moves to lifting the advisory. Develop and coordinate the end of the advisory messages with partners. The same communication methods, media partners, and outlets used to distribute the advisory should also be used to lift the advisory.

Be clear about the information used to end the advisory and the timing. Specifically, include the information on which you are basing your decision to end the advisory (e.g., the lab tested the water and it was negative for indicators).

Be sure to send the end of advisory notice to all partners in the communication network and the media. Post this information on websites clearly showing date and time. See the **Ending an Advisory Press Release Template** as an example.

Steps to Issue an End to the Advisory

- *Update the media and partners.*
- *Update notifications in the affected area, including websites.*
- *Update affected customers electronically; for example, by automated messages or e-mail.*
- *Follow up earlier press releases with an end of advisory press release and phone calls.*

Tools & Templates: During an Event— Issuing an Advisory

(Also see: Tools & Templates: Before an Event— Preparing for an Advisory)

- Call Center Data Checklist
- Key Questions for the Public Information Officer
- Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement
- Automated Messages
- Working with the Media Template
- Media Alert Template
- How to Use Press Release Templates
- Tier 1 Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template
- Significant Pressure Loss Advisory Press Release Template
- Advisory Update Press Release Template
- Ending an Advisory Press Release Template

Call Center Data Checklist

PURPOSE

Call center data are useful to evaluate the advisory response and the information provided to customers.

DIRECTIONS

Identify types of data available in the water system customer service database. Replace information in brackets with specific water system and advisory information. Adapt the list below to meet your needs. If an advisory involves multiple organizations, request similar data from partners or other call centers.

Important call center data include:

- ☐ Call volumes (calls per hour, day, and week).
- ☐ Number of callers who listened to recorded information only.
- ☐ Number of calls handled by a live agent.
- ☐ Calls abandoned (caller hung up without listening to recorded information).
- ☐ Caller demographics (city, ZIP, county).
- ☐ Caller contact information (phone number or e-mail) if needed to provide follow-up information.
- ☐ Call topic (drinking water advisory, outage, discoloration, taste, illness).
- ☐ Call reason (information request, report case, provide information).

Key Questions for the Public Information Officer

PURPOSE

This list provides a quick review of important points to consider for public communication during an advisory.

DIRECTIONS

Compare available public communication materials available to this list. Provide this list to other water systems or organizations responding to an advisory. Use this list when working with the media.

As a public information officer, consider the following before releasing information to the media:

1. **Ability**— Do you have the appropriate information on the subject?
2. **Competency**— Are you qualified to discuss the topic with the news media? If you are not the expert, find out who the expert is and arrange to have him or her brief the media.
3. **Authority**— Do you have jurisdiction over the issue? It's always advisable to stay in close contact with upper management to coordinate your response.
4. **Security**— Is the information classified? The security limitation is extremely important because of the need to safeguard classified and operationally sensitive information.
5. **Accuracy**— Is the information accurate? Public information officers have an obligation to provide accurate, factual information and to avoid speculation.
6. **Propriety**— Is the information appropriate to the situation? Ensure that information released displays sensitivity and dignity. For example, do not release photographs that could distress individuals or their family members.
7. **Policy**— Do the policies of your organization permit release of this information?

Adapted from: Mobley, J, Tatham EL, Reinhart K, Tatham C. Strategic Communication Planning: A Guide for Water Utilities. Denver, CO: Water Research Foundation; 2006.

Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement

PURPOSE

Spokesperson statements are based on the messages developed using the **Message Mapping Template** *(See* **Tools and Templates: Before an Event** *) or* **Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) Worksheet** *(See* **Tools and Templates: Before an Event** *). Developing statements with these message outlines can help to keep communication consistent.*

DIRECTIONS

Review your messages and essential information for the advisory. Follow the outline provided and adapt to the specific advisory. Work with other organizations that will provide spokespeople to develop their statements. Use this outline to develop a statement for press conferences, briefings, or other public communication. Fill in information in brackets.

My name is [name], and I am the [position title] of [organization]. [Describe role].

This is an evolving situation, and I want to provide as much information as possible. As of now, I can confirm:

- At approximately [time], a [brief description of reason for drinking water advisory, area affected].
- At this point,
  - » We know that [a main broke, positive coliform tests, there are no associated illnesses, etc.].
  - » We do not know [number of illnesses, specific contaminant, etc.].
- We have a [system, plan, procedure] in place for this type of situation. [Describe actions].
- [Primacy agency, health department, etc.] are assisting by [actions].
- The situation is [under, not yet under] control, and we are working with [local, state, federal] authorities to [actions].
- We are asking the public to [actions and advice: boil water, throw out ice, location of alternative water].
- We will continue to gather information and release it to you as soon as possible. I will be back to you [specific date, time] with an update.
- We appreciate everyone's patience as we work to correct [situation].

Automated Messages

PURPOSE

Automated messages take many forms. Developing the content for advisories requires careful planning. This information addresses automated messages specifically for drinking water advisories.

DIRECTIONS

Review the information about automated messages. Be sure your communication plan addresses automated messages specific to the water system and community capabilities and tools. Consult your primacy agency for specific requirements.

Automated broadcast notification is used to send messages quickly to large numbers of people. Broadcast notification systems, use a wide variety of commercially available systems that include the following:

- **Voice:** Delivering messages by prerecorded or synthesized voice is suited for brief messages. Automated systems like Reverse 911 can be programmed to leave messages on answering machines if there is no answer.
- **Text (SMS):** Short Messaging Service (SMS) delivers messages of up to 160 characters to cell phones.
- **E-mail:** E-mail is suitable for more detailed messages and can be sent to large groups relatively quickly. E-mail is delivered over the Internet, which is typically a reliable network unless there is a power outage.

***Note:** SMS and e-mail systems cannot guarantee delivery to a contact.*

Effective broadcast systems require:

- Accurate contact information.
- Delivery to a relevant contact point (e.g., reaching a cell phone versus a home landline).
- Simple, concise language.
- Coordination with other communication tools to provide access to more detailed information (e.g., website, customer call center).

Coordinate with other tools
Automated messages are useful tools in combination with press releases, door hangers, call center information, website information, and other outreach tools. These brief messages are useful in building awareness but are inadequate to provide all the information customers need to receive.

Automated Messages, continued

Accurate Contact Information

A notification system is only as good as the contact data. Uploading contact data is not ideal; data can be inaccurate (entry errors), false (purposefully wrong data), or invalid (phone number has changed or been disconnected). This is more likely when data are uploaded from customer records or purchased phone lists, or gathered from available databases. Even converting data from enhanced 911 systems to Reverse 911 programs will not assure accurate contact information. Automatically entering contact data into a system also has problems. Notification system vendors are wary of violating anti-spam laws and blacklisting.

Opt-in data collection can provide and validate content for notification. Individuals can be invited to join a list on a website, or indicate their interest when opening an account. This option can make it easier for subscribers to update their own contact information. This improves the results and reach of a broadcast. Opt-in processes for collecting data help protect the provider from unlawful use, because each recipient is giving the notification provider permission for future contact.

Timing

Automated notification systems are quick, but not instantaneous. Time is required:

- To prepare the message
- To direct the message to appropriate audiences
  (e.g., customers in specific subsections of the distribution system)
- To distribute the advisory
  - » Voice systems may only make 1,000 calls per hour
  - » E-mail or text message distribution to similar numbers occurs in minutes, and
- For the recipient to listen to or read the message and take action.

Automated Messages, continued

Content

The purpose of an automated broadcast notification is to prompt people to seek information and take appropriate action. Messages for automated notification systems must be simple and concise. It is not practical to use language from standard public notification templates. Because these messages must be short, they cannot convey the detail required in EPA's Public Notification Rule.

- Key elements of abbreviated messages related to water quality concerns are:
  - » Whom the message is from,
  - » What actions consumers should take,
  - » Whether alternative water supplies are available, and
  - » Where consumers can obtain additional information (e.g., telephone number, website).

Abbreviated Message Template— Boil Water Advisory

The [name of water system] is asking customers to boil tap water or use bottled water.
For more information, go to [www.watersystemwebsite.org] or call [###-###-####].

Abbreviated Message Template— End of Boil Water Advisory

[Name of water system] customers no longer need to boil tap water.
For more information, go to [www.watersystemwebsite.org] or call [###-###-####].

Working with the Media Template

PURPOSE

These are sample statements to use if members of the media call before a press release is issued. Getting the facts correct is a priority. Do not give information to the media before confirming facts with field staff, the emergency operations center, and management. Changing information after it is released can lead to media confusion and loss of focus on the key messages.

DIRECTIONS

Review these statements and adapt them with specific information about the water system. Incorporate the template into your standard operating procedures (SOPs) and emergency response plans (ERPs). Add specific information during an advisory. Rehearse the responses prior to speaking with media.

Insert information about a specific event in the brackets. See the following examples. Adapt it as needed.

Pre-scripted Immediate Responses to Media Inquiries

Use this template if the media is "at your door" and you need time to assemble the facts for the initial press release statement.

Getting the facts is a priority. It is important that your organization not give in to pressure to confirm or release information before you have confirmation (e.g., from your scientists and emergency operations center).

The following responses give you the necessary time to collect the facts. Use the **Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement** (See: **Tools and Templates: During an Event**) to provide an initial press release statement after the facts are gathered.

NOTE: Get authorization BEFORE releasing information.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Approved by: _____

Working with the Media Template, continued

Pre-scripted Responses

If on the phone to the media:

- "We've just learned about the [situation, incident, event] and are trying to get more complete information now. How can I reach you when I have more information?"
- "All our efforts are directed at [bringing the situation under control]. I'm not going to speculate about [the situation]. How can I reach you when I have more information?"
- "I'm not the authority on this subject. Let me have [name] call you right back."
- "We're preparing a statement now. Can I get back to you in about [number of minutes or hours]?"
- "You may check our website for background information, and I will fax/e-mail you with the time of our next update."

If in person at the incident site or in front of a press meeting:

"This is an evolving [situation, incident, event], and I know you want as much information as possible right now. While we work to get your questions answered, I want to tell you what we can confirm right now:

- At approximately [time], a [brief description of what happened].
- At this point, we do not know [how long the advisory will last, how many customers are affected, etc.].
- We have a [system, plan, procedure, operation] in place. We are being assisted by [local public health officials, emergency response officials] as part of that plan.
- The situation is [under, not yet under] control. We are working with [local, state, federal] authorities to [correct this situation, determine how this happened].
- We will continue to gather information and release it to you as soon as possible. I will be back to you within [amount of time in minutes or hours] to give you an update. As soon as we have confirmed information, it will be provided.
- We ask for your patience as we respond to this [situation, incident, event]."

Media Alert Template

PURPOSE

Water systems can invite the media to attend press conferences and briefings or to tour facilities related to advisories. This type of activity provides the media with a better understanding of drinking water infrastructure and why advisories occur.

DIRECTIONS

Use this template for media releases about press conferences, briefings, and facility tours. Replace information in brackets with specific water system and advisory information. Adapt the information as needed.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press contact: [name, title, organization, office phone, cell phone, e-mail]

Water system contact: [name, title, organization, office phone, cell phone, e-mail]

Press Conference for [Water System]

What: [press conference, briefing, tour of facilities/labs/distribution area related to the advisory].

When: [Date, time]

Where: [Address, building, city, state, ZIP; provide directions to site of press conference, briefing, tour of facilities/lab/distribution area]

With Whom: [Water System spokesperson, title; partner spokespeople, titles]

Why: Water quality is a concern for us in the community. We invite you to a [press conference, briefing, tour of our facilities/lab/distribution area] so you can seehow we [treat water, test water, etc]. The recent [type of advisory] put our community's drinking water quality into the spotlight. [Name of water system] will explain how the facility relates to the advisory and water quality. [Details— the reasons, actions, communication].

Please RSVP to [contact, phone, e-mail] by [date]

[Name of water system] provides water to [name of community, description of the organization].

How to Use Press Release Templates

PURPOSE

Press releases are a standard tool for an advisory. They can be the primary public notice, or they can communicate the advisory and direct customers to the official public notice. Website links or phone numbers can direct customers to the location of the official notice.

DIRECTIONS

A press release must include 10 required elements, EPA health effects language, and Public Notification Rule (PNR) required language to qualify as an official public notice.

The **Tier 1 Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template** *includes the ten required elements and moves the most important customer information to the top. The PNR does not specify the order of the required elements.*

For more information about required elements of a public notice, see the EPA's **Revised Public Notification Handbook** *and (***Appendix B: Online Resources, Public Notification, Safety, and Preparedness***).*

Tier I Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template

PURPOSE

Use when a corresponding Tier 1 Public Notice boil water advisory is required and issued.

DIRECTIONS:

Replace information in brackets with specific water system and advisory information. Adapt it as needed.

▲ *Denotes required element of a public notice per EPA's Public Notification Rule*

■ *Denotes mandatory health effects language per EPA's Public Notification Rule*

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name, Title, Phone, E-mail]

[Water System] issues a boil water advisory for all customers in [location]

[Water System] advises all customers to boil their drinking water. The boil water advisory is in effect until further notice.

▲ Customers should:

- Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute.
- Allow the water to cool before using.
- Store the cooled water in a clean container with a cover. .

Customers should use boiled water that has cooled or bottled water for:

- Drinking
- Brushing teeth
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Preparing food and baby formula
- Making ice
- Giving to pets

The advisory is in effect until [Water System] and [other agencies] are confident there is no longer a public health concern. We will provide the next update at [date or timeframe]. Customers will be notified immediately when the advisory is lifted.

Tier 1 Public Notification Rule Compliant Press Release Template, cont'd.

Tests results from [date] showed [▲contaminant] at [▲levels/amount]. The [Primacy Agency/Health Department] is working closely with [Water System] to find the contamination source and fix the problem.

[*Optional— include a quote from system spokesperson*]

To correct the problem, we are [▲ what is being done (e.g., chlorine was applied to the entire system)]. [▲ Give dates or time estimate for duration of the advisory, if possible]. [Number or No] illnesses related to the community's drinking water are reported.

▲ If you are concerned about your health or your family, call your health care provider or the [local health department].

[▲ Required EPA Health Effects Language for specific contaminant or violation. (■ 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 short-term effects, such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk to infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.)]

These symptoms are caused by many illnesses other than drinking water. [People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water from their health care provider.]

[If applicable: (▲ Water System or City) customers may pick up (alternative water supply, bottled water) at (location and time).]

■▲ 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).

For more information, go to [website] or call [▲ phone]. Mail inquiries should be sent to [▲ name], [Water System], [▲ address]. [If applicable, include health department contact.]

[*Optional— General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.*]

Significant Pressure Loss Advisory Press Release Template

PURPOSE

Use for loss of pressure or a water outage boil water advisory that does not require a Tier 1 Public Notice.

DIRECTIONS

Use this template for media releases about pressure losses. Replace information in brackets with specific water system and advisory information. Adapt it as needed.

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name, Title, Phone, E-mail]

[Water Main Break/Pressure Loss] in [location] causes [Water System] to issue a boil water advisory

Due to a [water main break/pressure loss], [Water System] advises customers to boil their drinking water. This advisory is for [specific areas (addresses, streets, boundaries]. Customers in other areas of [Water System] are not affected and do not need to boil their water.

Customers should use boiled water that has cooled or bottled water for:

- Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute.
- Allow the water to cool before using.
- Store the cooled water in a clean container with a cover.

Customers should use boiled water that has cooled or bottled water for:

- Drinking.
- Brushing teeth.
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Preparing food and baby formula.
- Making ice.
- Giving to pets.

The [Water System] is [describe corrective action being taken] to fix the problem. We estimate the Boil Water Advisory will end by [date or time frame]. We will provide the next update at [date or time frame].

This boil water advisory is a precaution. To limit risk, customers should follow the instructions contained in this release.

This boil water advisory is in effect until [Water System] and [other agencies, if applicable] determine the situation is corrected. Customers will be notified immediately when the advisory is lifted

(Add if applicable: [Water System or City] customers may pick up [alternative water supply, bottled water] at [location and time]).

For more information, go to [information website] or contact [Name, Title] at [Water System], [phone number] or [e-mail], or by mail at [address, city, state, ZIP]. *[Include health department contact, if appropriate.]*

[Optional— General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.]

Advisory Update Press Release Template

PURPOSE

Use to update information during a boil water advisory.

DIRECTIONS

Use this template for media releases during a boil water advisory. Replace information in brackets with specific water system and advisory information. Adapt it as needed.

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name, Title, Phone, E-mail]

Drinking water advisory continues: [Water System] customers in [location] should [boil] their water

[Water System] customers should continue to [boil] their drinking water. [Contaminant or event] is still a concern.

Customers should:

- Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute.
- Allow the water to cool before using.
- Store the cooled water in a clean container with a cover.

Customers should use boiled water that has cooled or bottled water for

- Drinking
- Brushing teeth
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Preparing food and baby formula
- Making ice
- Giving to pets

[Water System] continues to work with [Primacy Agency/Health Department] to [describe actions under way].

[*Optional— Include a quote from system spokesperson*]

We estimate that the [advisory] will end by [date or timeframe]. We will provide the next update at [date or timeframe].

This advisory is in effect until [Water System] and [other agencies, if applicable] determine [the tap water can be used for all purposes, does not present a public health concern]. Customers will be notified immediately when the advisory is lifted.

(Add if applicable: [Water System] customers may pick up [alternative water supply, bottled water] at [location and time]).

For more information, go to [information website] or contact [Name, Title] at [Water System], [phone number] or [e-mail address], or by mail at [street address, city, state, ZIP]. *[Include health department contact if appropriate.]*

[*Optional— General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.*]

Ending an Advisory Press Release Template

PURPOSE

Use to notify that a drinking water advisory has been lifted.

DIRECTIONS

Use this template for media releases about lifting of a water advisory. Replace information in brackets with specific water system and advisory information. Adapt it as needed.

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name, Title, Phone, E-mail]

Water advisory ends for [Water System] customers in [area]

Customers in [Water System— affected area] can use tap water for all purposes. The [drinking water advisory] is lifted. [Water System's] water quality has returned to [standard].

The [Water System] [provide details on tests results/corrective actions]. [Water system] consulted with [Primacy Agency/Health Department] to correct the problem.

On [date] a [boil water] advisory was issued to customers in [area] because of [test, main break, etc.] and to protect public health. The [System name] appreciates its customers' patience.

[Optional— Include a quote from water system spokesperson]

[Optional— Include a quote from health department or other agency spokesperson]

[Water System] will work with customers to answer questions [community meeting, phone number etc.]. Customers can look for information on this event in [bill stuffer, newsletter]. The [Consumer Confidence Report], due in [date] is another source for information.

Customers with questions or suggestions may call [telephone number] or e-mail [e-mail address]. Additional information is available from:

- [Water System— phone, website]
- [Health Department— phone, website]
- [Primacy Agency— phone, website]
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1-800-426-4791

Section 3: After an Event— Evaluating an Advisory

- Overview
- Checklist: After an Event
- Reporting Requirements
- Debriefing an Event
- Conducting an Evaluation
- Modifying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Updating Public Outreach
- Tools and Templates: After an Event— Evaluating an Advisory

Overview

Post-event activities are essential to improve, learn, and prepare for future events. They should reflect the scope and scale of the event. The key is to understand what worked and what did not work during a drinking water advisory in order to improve the process in the future.

Icon Key

Tools and Templates

Resources

Assessing Expectations

Each advisory incident is an opportunity to compare planning to performance, and expectations to outcomes.

Checklist: After an Event

Reporting Requirements

- ☐ Submit report to drinking water primacy agency.

Debriefing an Event

- ☐ Debrief and conduct an after action review with staff and partners.

Conducting an Evaluation

- ☐ Perform an evaluation.
- ☐ Collect data and information related to the advisory.
- ☐ Analyze and synthesize the data.

Modifying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

- ☐ Incorporate changes into SOPs.

Updating Public Outreach

- ☐ Identify additional communication steps.
- ☐ Follow up with the public.

Notes

Reporting Requirements

Submit Report to Drinking Water Primacy Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires that a copy of any required public notice be submitted by the water system to their designated primacy agency. Consult with the designated primacy agency for additional reporting requirements.

See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Primacy Agency** to find examples of state primacy agency report forms.

Notes

Debriefing an Event

Debrief and Conduct an After Action Review with Staff and Partners

Debriefing after an advisory helps organizations and communities understand what happened and why it happened during a drinking water advisory. A debriefing offers an opportunity to voice concerns and offer potential improvements. It often is informal and may be led by a neutral facilitator.

The format and size of the debriefing is based on the scope and scale of the drinking water advisory. In general, each division or organization that participated should be involved. Debriefings may benefit from having the perspective of an organization that was not involved but was affected by the drinking water advisory.

An After Action Review (AAR) is a structured form of debriefing that can compare planning with real activity. AARs can provide a clear understanding of what contributed to success and how to replicate it in the future. They also can provide a common understanding of where improvements canbe made and who will be responsible for following through on agreed action steps. AARs describe outcomes and planned actions.

The debriefing and AAR process and tools can be adapted for individual exercises and debriefings. See the **Exercise Planning Template**.

See the **Debriefing Discussion Guide** as an example.

The following are steps for conducting a debriefing.

1. **Prepare:** The **Advisory Feedback Form** can be used to plan a debriefing.
2. **Conduct:** Ground rules should be established. Consider using an outside neutral facilitator.
3. **Report:** Results of a debriefing can be incorporated into future planning efforts.

Debriefing Ground Rules

To facilitate a debriefing:

- *Respect colleagues. Refrain from personal remarks or assigning blame.*
- *Be honest and willing to share your knowledge and experience.*
- *Keep discussions about individual performance within the group.*
- *Read through the background information and consider the discussion questions.*
- *Accept the drinking water advisory as it happened.*
- *Avoid getting bogged down in small details.*
- *Think about the big picture.*
- *Provide paths forward and solutions where possible.*
- *Observe the time limits allotted for the debriefing.*

Conducting an Evaluation

Perform an Evaluation

Evaluation is an ongoing assessment of a drinking water advisory protocol. It is the comparison of SOP criteria to performance. The collection and analysis of subjective experiences along with the analysis of objective forms of data or information provide the foundation for evaluation. Even the most basic evaluation provides insight and can improve future advisories and overall communication.

The scope of an advisory and a water system's resources and capacities guide the evaluation process. The time, resources, and expertise needed for an evaluation vary with the scope. Evaluations can be conducted over time and in different stages. Evaluations draw on many sources of information, including, operational reports, debriefings, surveys, and public comment. See the **Debriefing Evaluation Form**.

Collect Data and Information Related to the Advisory

Different types of data are described below:

- **Quantitative data**, such as water quality data, Web analytics, and epidemiology statistics.
- **Qualitative data**, such as customer comments, media reports, staff memos, etc. See **Appendix B: Online Resources, Data Management** for links to information on qualitative data collection.

See the **Advisory Feedback Form** and **Call Center Data Collection Framework** for collecting information from partners.

Evaluation Tips

- *Make a list of evaluation questions.*
- *Identify the data sources.*
- *Link the sources.*
- *Proceed with the evaluation.*

Surveys

Surveys can be used after an advisory to collect quantitative and qualitative information.

- Customer service surveys may include a section related to an advisory.
- Surveys can be designed to measure perceptions, actions, and communication effects and outcomes.
- The perceptions and recall of respondents will change with the amount of time that passes between an advisory and a survey
- Surveys can be short and focused or longer to gather a full range of data.

Consult the **Post-Advisory Community Survey** for ideas about what to ask in a survey.

Data Management

Manage data as it is collected. Data management activities may include:

- Storing data as hard and electronic copies in a central location for easy access.
- Requesting information from partners involved with the advisory.
- Asking partners about limitations or privacy policies that might limit the ability to report the data.
- Working with database experts to ensure that the database structure is optimal for doing the planned analysis.

Good Practice

Recognize that data sources and types vary by agency, capacity, and the scope and scale of the drinking water advisory.

Tip

Designate a central location to archive evaluation data.

Analyze and Synthesize the Data

Data are valuable when they are applied. The information collected must be analyzed, synthesized, and reported in a useful format. Use the data to develop questions for public outreach and for the basis of evaluation. Develop a plan for data analysis that will give the answers needed for improvement and decision making.

Appendix B: Online Resources, Data Management contains links to websites on data frameworks.

Table 2 presents examples of different types of resources and data that can be used to evaluate communication activities during a drinking water advisory.

Table 2: Examples of Types and Sources of Drinking Water Advisory Data

Water Systems	Public Health	Media
• Water Quality • Operations Reports • Customer Service • Reports/Interviews	• Surveillance • Laboratory	• Logs • Archive Review • Web Analytics

Notes

Modifying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Incorporate Changes into SOPs

Develop recommendations to improve communication and SOPs using information derived from the debriefing and evaluation processes. Incorporate changes in water system protocols and communication activities. Use a **Corrective Action Tracking Form** and the **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Updates**.

Participants of the advisory and debriefing need to know the results of the evaluation process. Reports should reflect the size and scope of the drinking water advisory and can range from a simple memo to a full-scale report. A report should summarize essential information for other post-event steps. See the **Follow-Up Memo**.

Routine updating of contact lists is an essential task. Use the debriefing process as an opportunity to improve this resource. Ensure routine updating by including it in regular protocols. Build reminders, such as online calendar prompts, into plans to update contact lists.

Tip

Use the same approach for modifying SOPs after an exercise or an advisory.
(See page 34).

Updating Public Outreach

Identify Additional Communication Steps

For the public, lifting an advisory may not be the end of the event. An advisory may disrupt the community and undermine the public's confidence in the quality of the drinking water. Continued public outreach can help a water system maintain credibility and trust with customers and stakeholders following an advisory.

Follow up with the Public

Work with partners to identify, develop, and distribute additional outreach materials and activities to engage the public. These may include:

- Revised messages,
- Letter to customers,
- Updates to websites, newsletters, and bill inserts, and
- Meetings with reporters and editors.

Water systems can use the annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) to explain advisories, give advice, and provide other sources of information. Advisories due to contamination or a violation must be noted in the CCR tables and use specific EPA language. See the **Media Alert Template**.

Media Tours

A media tour of water system facilities, labs, or distribution systems can give reporters a better understanding of advisories. Follow-up stories can explain the big picture, such as infrastructure needs and why water mains break. Water systems cannot control a media story, but can offer a different story.

Tools & Templates: After an Event— Evaluating an Advisory

- Debriefing Discussion Guide
- Advisory Feedback Form
- Call Center Data Collection Framework
- Post-Advisory Community Survey
- Corrective Action Tracking Form
- Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Updates
- Debriefing Evaluation Form
- Follow-Up Memo

Debriefing Discussion Guide

PURPOSE

Debriefings are productive when properly structured. This discussion guide provides an outline of key points to cover during the debriefing session.

DIRECTIONS

Use these questions as a starting point for a debriefing discussion about the drinking water advisory event.

What were the goals of the drinking water advisory?

- Whom were we trying to reach?
- What did we want the target audiences to do with the information?

What actually happened?

- List at least three things that worked really well and analyze why.
  - » How do you know they worked well?
  - » What goals or targets did they meet?
  - » Can you identify the successful actions that can be replicated in future events?
- List at least three things that did not work as planned and analyze why. Determine how they can be done differently.
  - » What criteria did you apply to determine that an action did not work as planned?
  - » Can you identify actions or decisions to avoid in the future?
  - » What might you do differently the next time?
  - » Did you collect or track the information needed to assess or evaluate the advisory properly?
- List any plans, procedures, communication materials, tools, or templates that need revision or development.

What needs to happen next?

- Who needs to be involved in improvements?
- What is the time frame?
- How will others be informed about improvements and changes?
- What should be done differently next time?

Advisory Feedback Form

PURPOSE

This form is intended to be used to gather information from water system staff and other agencies about the advisory protocol and process.

DIRECTIONS

Each participating agency or organization should complete the information below. Remove the identifying data and compile the results. Use the data to update and modify advisory protocols.

Advisory Incident: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Agency/Division: _____ Role in Advisory: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

From your perspective, what three things were done best? (What went right?)

Based on your experience, list three improvements needed.

Identify action steps that could address these improvements.

List plans, procedures, or communication issues that need revision or development.

Was all the appropriate information needed to assess or evaluate the advisory collected properly?
If not, what is missing and should be collected next time?

Please provide additional comments.

Call Center Data Collection Framework

PURPOSE

This data framework provides an example of how to apply call center or customer service (CS) data to an evaluation. The framework provides a more complete data set and includes measurements and goals. The framework approach can be used to evaluate other data from an advisory. This framework example uses specific goals and measurements for evaluation.

DIRECTIONS

Adapt the framework to reflect water system data. Collect and analyze the data using the measurements provided. Use data in customer service databases and from staff debriefings. Incorporate the findings into the advisory protocol as well as other call center and customer service actions.

Evaluation Question	Indicator or Measure	Unit of Measure	Advisory Objective
Did customers call for information about the advisory?	Calls made in response to the advisory	• Number of calls during the advisory	Customers know where to get information during an advisory
	Number of calls after the advisory	• Number of calls after lifting of the advisory • Number of calls requesting more information	Customers know the advisory is lifted and how to get information
	Time during which calls continued after the advisory	• Time of last call about advisory	Customers had continued concerns that were addressed
Did communication target the advisory area?	Calls sorted by area	• Number in specific area • Number outside the area • Percent area call/all calls	Communicate an advisory to a targeted area
Were customer questions anticipated and answered appropriately?	Call themes	• Number of calls by customer service (CS) code	Identify frequent questions to understand advisory concerns and reactions
	Response scripts and messages updated	• Yes/No • Number of updates	CS staff are updated with new information
	Referred calls Location to which calls were referred	• Yes/No • Number of calls referred by agency	CS staff are prepared to refer calls to other agencies as necessary

Call Center Data Collection Framework, continued

Evaluation Question	Indicators or Measure	Unit of Measure	Advisory Objective
Were Customer Service (CS) staff prepared for an advisory?	Response script preparation time	• Time to deliver response scripts to CS staff	Advisory communication material is available for CS in a timely manner
	Briefed CS staff Updated CS Staff	• Yes/No • Number of updates	Advisory information is provided and explained to CS staff
	Response scripts adequately address customer questions	• Yes/No	CS response scripts provide appropriate support
Did CS staff have the correct resources for an advisory?	Plan for staffing Hours for staffing, length of shift	• Yes/No • Time per day for advisory	CS staffing can adapt to increased demands during an advisory
	Phone lines were accessible Enough phone lines were available	• Yes/No • Yes/No • Number of phone lines	Communication lines have the capacity to meet increased demands during an advisory
	Call response time Length of advisory calls Web/e-mail response	• Time to return customer calls • Time per phone conversation • Number of e-mails received	CS staff have the resources to respond to customers in a timely manner during an advisory
Did CS data codes work for an advisory?	Rank customer service codes used during the advisory	• Number of calls/inquiries per each CS code listed	CS codes will provide information and data about advisories
Were CS evaluation results incorporated into protocols?	Customer survey	• Yes/No	Customers understand communication
	Apply survey data to advisory protocol and materials	• Yes/No	Use CS data to improve advisory response

Post-Advisory Community Survey

PURPOSE

Surveys are an important element of an evaluation. Conducting a survey after an advisory can provide crucial information about messages and the communication preferences of a water system's audiences.

DIRECTIONS

This survey can be used for phone, mail, or online formats. The questions provided are suggestions and should be adapted to suit the advisory and community. The questions in this example can be placed in regular water system surveys or in public health surveys.

[Letterhead or Logo]

[Water System] needs your help to better serve you and protect your community's health. We want to improve public information and advice. Specifically, [Water System] wants to understand how people received information and advice about the drinking water advisory on [date(s)]. Your participation will help [Water System] improve communication in the future.

The survey below will take about [##] minutes to complete. All information collected is confidential. We cannot identify who does or does not participate, or link answers to any one person.

We will use the results of this survey to [report data, describe how you will use/publish the data].

[Instructions about how to submit the survey: Consider using e-mail and an online survey tool to conduct the survey to make it easier to tabulate results. Otherwise, include a self-addressed stamped envelope or postage-paid form to improve response rates.]

For more information or if you have questions, please contact:

[Water system contact name]

[Water system contact phone]

[Water system website]

[Local public health department name]

[Local public health department phone] [Local public health department website]

Post-Advisory Community Survey, continued

1. Which type of water do you prefer to drink? Please rank your preferences using a scale of 1–4, with 1 as the most preferred type and 4 as the least preferred.

____ Water straight from the tap

____ Bottled water

____ Filtered tap water

____ Other (please specify) _____

2. How many 8-ounce glasses of water do you drink on a normal day?

☐ 0 ☐ 4–6

☐ 1–3 ☐ 7+

On [date], [Water System] issued a [type] advisory because [reason].

3. Did you know about this [type] water advisory on [date]?

☐ Yes

☐ No (Skip to Question 14)

3a. What advice did you get during this [type] water advisory? Check all that apply.

☐ Do not use tap water

☐ Boil all tap water

☐ Not sure what the advice was

☐ Do not drink tap water

☐ Was told the water was safe

☐ I did not get any advice (Go to Question 4)

3b. Where did you get the information about this [type] water advisory? Check all that apply.

☐ Family member or friend or neighbor

☐ [Water System]

☐ [Local newspaper(s)]

☐ Local radio. Which station(s): _____

☐ [Local Health Department]

☐ Website, blog, other web format. Please specify: _____

☐ Television. Which station(s): _____

☐ Coworker

☐ Automated message (e.g., answering machine, voice mail, email, text message). Please specify: _____

☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) Please specify: _____

☐ Door hanger or Door-to-door visit

☐ Other. Please specify: _____ _____

Post-Advisory Community Survey, continued

4. During this [type] water advisory, did you use water straight from the tap to… Check all that apply.

- ☐ Flush the toilet
- ☐ Brush teeth
- ☐ Make baby formula
- ☐ Wash hands
- ☐ Water plants
- ☐ Wash, prepare, or cook food
- ☐ Shower or bath
- ☐ Give to pets
- ☐ Drink
- ☐ Make coffee or tea
- ☐ Make other beverages (e.g., fruit juice, powdered drink mix)

5. During this [type] water advisory, did you boil the tap water before you used it?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (Go to Question 6)

5a. If yes, did you use boiled tap water to… Check all that apply.

- ☐ Flush the toilet
- ☐ Brush teeth
- ☐ Make baby formula
- ☐ Wash hands
- ☐ Water plants
- ☐ Wash, prepare, or cook food
- ☐ Give to pets
- ☐ Drink
- ☐ Make coffee or tea
- ☐ Make other beverages (e.g., fruit juice, powdered drink mix)

6. Did you hear the [type] water advisory ended on [date]?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (Go to Question 7)

6a. If yes, where did you hear or see about the end of the [advisory]? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Family member or friend or neighbor
- ☐ [Water System]
- ☐ [Local newspaper(s)]
- ☐ Local radio. Which station(s): _____
- ☐ [Local Health Department]
- ☐ Website, blog, other web format. Please specify: _____
- ☐ Television. Which station(s): _____
- ☐ Coworker
- ☐ Automated message (e.g., answering machine, voice mail, email, text message). Please specify: _____
- ☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) Please specify: _____
- ☐ Door hanger or Door-to-door visit
- ☐ Other. Please specify: _____ _____

6b. When you heard the [type] water advisory ended, did you resume regular water use?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Post-Advisory Community Survey, continued

7. What sources of information about the [type] water advisory were most useful? Please rank using 1 as the most useful and 10 as the least useful.

- ☐ Family member or friend or neighbor
- ☐ [Water System]
- ☐ [Local newspaper(s)]
- ☐ Local radio. Which station(s): _____
- ☐ [Local Health Department]
- ☐ Website, blog, other web format. Please specify: _____
- ☐ Television. Which station(s): _____
- ☐ Coworker
- ☐ Automated message (e.g., answering machine, voice mail, email, text message). Please specify: _____
- ☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) Please specify: _____
- ☐ Door hanger or Door-to-door visit
- ☐ Other. Please specify: _____ _____

8. Did you want more information during the advisory?

- ☐ I really needed more information
- ☐ I would have liked more information
- ☐ I had enough information (Go to Question 9)

8a. If yes, which source would you MOST want to give you more information? Select one.

- ☐ Family member or friend or neighbor
- ☐ [Water System]
- ☐ [Local newspaper(s)]
- ☐ Local radio. Which station(s): _____
- ☐ [Local Health Department]
- ☐ Website, blog, other web format. Please specify: _____
- ☐ Television. Which station(s): _____
- ☐ Coworker
- ☐ Automated message (e.g., answering machine, voice mail, email, text message). Please specify: _____
- ☐ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) Please specify: _____
- ☐ Door hanger or Door-to-door visit
- ☐ Other. Please specify: _____ _____

9. How clear was the advice about your tap water? Select one.

- ☐ Very unclear
- ☐ Unclear
- ☐ Understandable
- ☐ Clear
- ☐ Very clear

10. Please add below any comments you would like to make about the information you received.

_____

_____

Post-Advisory Community Survey, continued

11. During the [date range] water advisory, can you remember what caused the problem with your tap water? If so, please give details and where you heard it.

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. After the incident, did you find out more about what caused the problem with your tap water? If so, please give details of the new information you found and where you got it from.

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. How long did you boil your water?

- ☐ Until it started to bubble/ reached the boiling point
- ☐ A few seconds
- ☐ 1 minute
- ☐ 2–4 minutes
- ☐ 5 minutes or more
- ☐ I did not boil my water

Demographics

14. Did you live in [area] on [date of event]?

- ☐ Yes (Skip to Question 15)
- ☐ No

14a. If no, what was your ZIP code on [date]? _____

15. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

16. What is your age?

- ☐ 17 or under
- ☐ 18–30
- ☐ 31–40
- ☐ 41–50
- ☐ 51–60
- ☐ 61–70
- ☐ 70+

Post-Advisory Community Survey, continued

17. Do you have children under the age of 18 in your home?

☐ Yes, how many ____ ☐ No (Go to Question 18)

17a. How many children under the age of 18 are in your home? _____

17b. Age range of children. Check all that apply.

☐ 0–1 year ☐ 5–12 years
☐ 2–4 years ☐ 13–17 years

18. Is English the primary language in your home?

☐ Yes
☐ No, the primary language is _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Corrective Action Tracking Form

PURPOSE

Tracking corrective actions to be taken after a drinking water advisory helps to ensure that follow-up items are completed. This form can be used for advisory debriefings, exercises, and other collaborations.

DIRECTIONS

Complete this form immediately after a session. Distribute to the responsible individual or organization.

TRACKING NO.	DATE ENTERED:
Responsible Staff:	
Organization:	
Phone:	E-mail:
Drinking Water Advisory Date:	
Short Description of Findings:	
Determination:	
Detailed Description of Action Needed:	
Estimated Completion Date:	
For Internal Use Only	
Entered By/Date:	Date Action Completed:

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Updates

PURPOSE

Updating SOPs based on the evaluation findings is the final step after an event. This table provides a simple means of tracking action items and assigning responsibilities for those updates.

DIRECTIONS

In the table below:

- *Identify the participating departments, agencies, or other partners in the* "Team/Group" *columns*
- *Identify the area in need of improvement in the "Issue/Problem" column*
- *Identify the actions needed to make the improvement in the "Required Actions" column*
- *Identify the role or responsibility for each team/group involved in the action as one of the following:*

P = Primary
S = Support
O = Oversight
C = Coordination
N/A = Not applicable; No responsibility related to this action

This table can be adapted to reflect current practices or terms used in a specific organization. Include the date as a point of reference.

Date						
Issue/Problem	[Team/Group] [e.g.,Water Quality]	[Team/Group] [e.g.,Operations]	[Team/Group] [e.g.,Communication]	[Team/Group] [e.g.,Administration]	[Team/Group] [e.g.,Management]	Required Actions
[For example: Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing not effectively reached during event]	*[N/A]*	*[S]*	*[P]*	*[O]*	*[C]*	*[For example: Update list of susceptible populations and contacts]*

Debriefing Evaluation Form

PURPOSE

This evaluation form can provide data to help evaluate an exercise, advisory, and debriefing. The information can be used to improve advisories, as well as to develop and evaluate future protocols and exercises.

DIRECTIONS

Copy this form and give to the debriefing or exercise participants after the session. Ask them to complete the form before they leave. Collate the results and use them to evaluate the debriefing, advisory, or exercise. The form can also be used as an informal discussion guide for debriefings and exercises.

1. Did this exercise assist your organization in understanding the aspects of collaboration needed to respond to water and health issues?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Please explain/elaborate: _____

   _____

   _____

2. Overall, will this experience assist you in better serving your community?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Please explain/elaborate: _____

   _____

   _____

3. Were all of the organizations needed for this type of collaboration "at the table"?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If no, which organizations or individuals should be involved in future collaborations? _____

   _____

   _____

4. Did you need more information to address the scenarios?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If yes, what type of additional information did you need? _____

   _____

   _____

Debriefing Evaluation Form, continued

5. Were any methods of communication missing?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If yes, what would you add? _____

   _____

   _____

6. What steps does your organization need to take to improve communication and relationships with stakeholders in your community? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. What steps does your organization need to take to improve relationships with water systems/health departments/health care providers? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Please provide other comments or observations. _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Thank you again for your time and assistance in this project!

Follow-Up Memo

PURPOSE

Water systems and organizations involved with an advisory or exercise should communicate about results and actions. Sending a simple memo will keep staff and the communication network partners engaged and informed.

DIRECTIONS

Use this outline for the follow-up memo. Include details as appropriate. Adapt the memo for each specific advisory, exercise, or other event.

MEMO: [Subject]

DATE:

TO: [All communication network participants and any other organizational representatives who are expected to undertake activities as a result of the drinking water advisory, exercise, or event.]

FROM: [Water System Manager/Emergency Operations Plan Leader]

CONTENTS:

- [Thank you for participation during the advisory/exercise/event]
- [Describe general success of the advisory/exercise/event]
- [Describe follow-up assignments]
  - » [Actions/recommendations]
  - » [Assigned to]
  - » [Expected completion date]
  - » [Report progress to whom, when]

ATTACHMENTS:

- [Advisory/Exercise/Event report]
- [Corrective Action Tracking Form]

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

***Note:** Terms in this glossary are defined by their use in this toolbox.*

A

Abbreviated message: Brief communication with essential information that directs the reader to a separate location for additional information. It is typically delivered through electronic means, such as a phone message, a text message, a social media format, or a scroll on a television broadcast.

Advisory [Drinking Water Advisory]: Communication to water users (customers) about specific actions to take regarding water use.

After Action Review (AAR): A structured and facilitated discussion among participants in an event to compare what actually happened with what was intended to occur.

ASDWA: Association of State Drinking Water Administrators.

Automated message: Communication delivered through a mechanical system, such as a reverse 911 system.

AWWA: American Water Works Association.

B

Boil Water Advisory: Communication to customers of a water system about the need to boil water before using it.

C

Capacity: The ability of an organization to contribute resources, such as staff time, money, and expertise.

CCR: Consumer confidence report.

CDC: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Coliform bacteria: Coliforms are a group of bacteria found in plant material, water, and soil. Coliforms are also present in the digestive tract and feces of humans and animals. Most of the time, these bacteria are not harmful. Total coliforms is another term for the full group of coliforms; they are indicators of possible water contamination.

Coliphage: A virus that infects bacteria is called a phage. Phages infect specific species of bacteria. Coliphages infect coliform bacteria. Coliphages do not infect humans or cause illness. A positive test for coliphages indicates the water may be contaminated with feces or *E. coli*.

Consecutive system: A water system that purchases its water supply from another water system.

Contaminant: An unwanted and/or undesirable chemical or microbe found in drinking water.

Corrective Action: The activities taken by a water system to fix an identified deficiency.

Crisis communication: A communication approach that relays the risks and benefits of different actions to agencies, consumers, and other stakeholders during an emergency or disaster.

Critical customer: Customers that receive priority notification during a drinking water advisory.

CS: Customer service.

D

Drinking Water Advisory: Water systems and state or local agencies issue drinking water advisories when they believe water quality is or may be compromised. Advisories tell individuals, schools, hospitals, businesses, and others about the situation and how to take immediate action.

Debriefing: An informal, semi-structured discussion with stakeholders, partners, and other participants, after an advisory, exercise, or event, used to obtain useful information and improve or enhance operations.

Do Not Drink advisory: Communication to customers of a water system to avoid tap water and to use other sources of water for human consumption. A Do Not Drink advisory is used if boiling the water will not kill, inactivate, or remove the contaminant of concern, or if boiling would concentrate or release it into the air.

Do Not Use advisory: Communication to customers of a water system not to use tap water for any purpose, including sanitation and fire protection.

E

Escherichia coli (E. coli): A species of fecal coliform bacteria. *E. coli* almost always comes from animal feces. *E. coli* is considered the best indicator of fecal water contamination. If *E. coli* is present, harmful bacteria or other pathogens may also be present in the water. Some rare types of *E. coli*, such as O157:H7, can cause serious illness.

EPA: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ERP: Emergency response plan.

Evaluation: A process that compares outcomes to expectations. Evaluation consists of systematically collecting information about the characteristics and outcomes of activities and comparing them to practices, protocols, and materials. Based on the comparison, recommended changes to practices, protocols, and materials can be made in order to reduce uncertainties and improve effectiveness in future actions and decisions.

Evaluator: An individual who observes and assesses the interactions and outcomes of an exercise. Evaluators do not participate in the exercise.

Exercise: A practice event based on a scenario to test the effectiveness of planning. Also called drill or tabletop exercise.

F

Facilitator: A designated individual to structure and run an exercise or debriefing.

Fecal coliform indicators: Groups of microbes, such as *E. coli*, enterococci, and coliphage, used under the Groundwater Rule to indicate possible water contamination.

G

Groundwater: Water from wells, springs, or aquifers used by water systems for drinking water.

H

Health literacy: The ability to receive, process, understand, and act on basic health information.

HSEEP: Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5): A presidential directive for management of domestic incidents that requires all federal departments and agencies to make adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by state, tribal, and local organizations a condition for federal preparedness assistance.

I

Incident Command System (ICS): A standardized, on-scene management approach used by all levels of government, many nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to provide organizational structure for emergency response and recovery.

J

Jurisdiction: The sphere of authority related to legal responsibilities and that can be political/geographic (city, county, state) or functional (water service, public health).

M

Mandatory advisory: A notice or communication required by federal or state law and issued to protect public health.

MCL: Maximum Contaminant Level.

Message: The primary instructions, actions, and information expressed in a communication with an audience.

Message map: A risk communication tool to develop the most pertinent information about an event or emergency. A message map is a set of organized statements that address likely questions about an incident.

MOU: Memorandum of understanding.

N

National Incident Management System (NIMS): A system to coordinate emergency preparedness and incident management among various federal, state, and local agencies. NIMS provides the template for the management of incidents.

Network: A group of partners that work together to achieve timely, effective, and extensive outreach. Some communities may have an existing collaboration, usually coordinated around emergency management.

Nitrate: Nitrate is a chemical found in most fertilizers, animal manure, and liquid waste discharged from septic tanks. Natural bacteria in soil can convert nitrogen into nitrate.

Notification: The process of communicating information to audiences per Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements.

P

Partner: Any organization or agency that can help to plan, develop, and distribute messages.

pH: The measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a solution on a scale from 0–14.

PNiWriter: A web tool for preparing drinking water advisories that comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Precautionary advisory: Communication to customers of a water system issued when contamination is suspected but not confirmed.

PIO: Public Information Officer.

PNR: Public Notification Rule.

Preparedness: Anticipating and planning response and recovery to unpredictable events.

Primacy agency: The agency that regulates and enforces community water systems under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Drinking water programs can be located in a state department of health, a state department of environment, or at the regional Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) level.

Public official: Any elected or appointed member of a jurisdictional or water system governing body.

R

Risk communication: An exchange of information and opinion among a water system, consumers, primacy agencies, public health authorities, and other stakeholders in both nonemergency situations and as part of crisis communication. This exchange assists customers as they evaluate information, put it into context, and make health-related decisions for themselves and those who depend on them.

S

Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA): The main federal law that ensures the quality of Americans' drinking water. Under the SDWA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets standards for drinking water quality and oversees the states, localities, and water suppliers who implement those standards.

Scope, scale, and severity: Terms used in this project as criteria to help water systems define how much collaboration and outreach is needed for an advisory.

Scope:
The population, number of water systems, and/or jurisdictions involved with the advisory. The greater the number affected, the larger the scope.

Scale:
Size of the area affected, such as a neighborhood, entire city, or geographic region. The larger the area affected, the larger the scale of the response.

Severity:
Is this a routine situation or new? A disease outbreak or natural disaster or cross connection? The greater the threat to public health, the greater the severity.

Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO): A communication tool to identify the key point or objective to be conveyed in an interview with the media.

SOP: Standard Operating Procedures.

Spokesperson: An individual responsible for interfacing with the public, the media, and/or other agencies requiring information about an incident.

Strategic communication plan: A business management tool that community water systems can use for decision making and resource allocation in communicating with the public, customers, and other stakeholders.

Surface water: Water that collects on the ground and in an open body of water, such as a lake, stream, river, or pond.

Susceptible populations: Groups of people with conditions or medical needs that make them more vulnerable to the adverse effects of poor water quality. Susceptible populations include babies and young children, pregnant women, and people who are immunocompromised, elderly, or on dialysis.

T

Tier 1 Public Notice: The top level of public notice, which requires water systems to inform customers within 24 hours of a violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) standards because the situation poses an acute public health risk.

V

Variable Message Signs (VMS): VMS, also known as changeable message signs (CMS) or dynamic message signs (DMS), are electronic road signs that display messages.

W

Web analytics: The collection, measurement, analysis, and reporting of internet data for a specific website. Measures include number of visitors, page views, and time spent on a website.

Wholesale system: A water system that has a financial agreement to sell water to another water system.

Widgets: A web application that places information in a webpage, allowing users to interact with the content contained in the widget. Widgets display information and invite the user to act in a number of ways. Typical widgets include buttons, dialog boxes, pop-up windows, pull-down menus, and icons.

Appendix B: Online Resources

Public Notification, Safety, and Preparedness

- Revised Public Notification Handbook. Second Revision. EPA. 2010. Chap. 3–6. http://www.epa.gov/safewater/publicnotification/pdfs/Revised-Public-Notification-Handbook-CWS.pdf
- Water: Public Notification Rule. Basic Information. EPA. http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/sdwa/publicnotification/basicinformation.cfm
- Water: Consumer Information. EPA. http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/index.cfm
- PNiWriter–Web tool for preparing SDWA-compliant public notices. EPA. http://pniwriter.com/
- Water-Related Emergencies and Outbreaks. CDC. http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency
- Recovering from Disaster. Federal Emergency Management Agency. http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/IS22/Unit5.pdf
- Lead and Copper Rule 2007 Short-Term Revisions and Clarifications Implementation Guidance. EPA. http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/sdwa/lcr/upload/2007_12_11_lcrmr_pdfs_draft_guidance_lcmr_implementationshortterm.pdf

Data Management

- Analyzing Quantitative Data for Evaluation. Evaluation Briefs. CDC. 2009. http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/pdf/brief20.pdf
- Analyzing Qualitative Data. Program Development & Evaluation. University of Wisconsin-Extension. 2003. http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/G3658-12.pdf
- Collecting Evaluation Data: An Overview of Sources and Methods. Program Development and Evaluation. University of Wisconsin-Extension. 1996. http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/G3658-4.pdf
- Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation: Questionnaires. Evaluation Briefs. CDC. 2008. http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/evaluation/pdf/brief14.pdf
- Qualitative Research Guidelines Project. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 2006. http://www.qualres.org/index.html

Disinfecting Water

- Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water. EPA. 2012. http://water.epa.gov/drink/emerprep/emergencydisinfection.cfm
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