What to Do When Your Establishment Loses Water Service

A lack of hot and cold running water under pressure impacts all uses of water – consumption, handwashing, food preparation, warewashing, and cleaning of the premises. All operations must cease during an extended water outage (over one hour) unless the food establishment has an Emergency Preparedness Plan that has been accepted by the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) prior to the water outage. If a boil water notice is issued for your establishment, refer to What to do When a Boil Water Notice is Issued.

TAKE ACTION

☐ Call the City of Houston Help Line (311) to report no water or no running water under pressure and determine the estimated length of interruption.

☐ Close the establishment if there is an interruption in water service lasts for more than one hour and discontinue food preparation, food handling, warewashing, and cleaning operations.

OR

If applicable, implement your establishment’s Emergency Preparedness Plan that has been accepted by the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) for an interruption in water service if and only if no imminent health hazard exists with the implementation and operation of the plan.

☐ Notify the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) of the closure or if your establishment is operating under its BCHS-accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan at www.houstonconsumer.org, chs@houstontx.gov, or 832-393-5100.

☐ Shut off water at the water main if possible.

☐ Disconnect machines with water line connections (ice machines, spray misters, etc.).

☐ Ensure a food establishment manager or person in charge is responsible for consistent compliance with food requirements.

WHEN WATER SERVICE IS RESTORED

Flush Equipment and Clean Up

☐ For a loss in water service due to a watermain break, pump failure, service shut-off, or any other reason to believe the water supply may have become contaminated (For a boil water notice, refer to Flush Equipment and Clean Up):
  ○ Flush all pipes in the facility by running every hot and cold water faucet for at least two minutes or until the water is clear.
  ○ Then clean and sanitize faucet screens.

☐ Flush, clean, and sanitize all equipment and fixtures with water line connections - post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, steam kettles, coffee or tea urns, sinks, and other equipment with water connections in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.

☐ Clean water line strainers on mechanical dishwashing and glasswashing machines and run three complete cycles prior to using dishwashing machine. Verify sanitization by using test kits or a
Follow the manufacturer’s directions to flush an ice machine, if available, or follow the instructions below.

- Flush the water line to the machine inlet.
- Close valve on water line and disconnect water line from the inlet.
- Open valve, run water through for 10 minutes, dispose of the water, and close the valve.
- Reconnect to the machine inlet, open valve, and flush the water lines in the machine.
- Replace filters on equipment if not designed to be cleaned in place.
- Turn on the machine and throw away the first three batches of ice.

- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Run drinking fountains continuously for two minutes to flush the system.
- Clean and sanitize all fixtures and sinks connected to water lines.
- Change out all filters after water lines have been flushed.
- Clean and sanitize all tools and equipment used for cleaning.

**PREPARE TO REOPEN**

**Meet the Requirements to Resume Normal Operations**

- Water service has been restored to providing hot and cold potable (drinking) water under pressure.
- All plumbing fixtures and pipes are operating properly and are in good repair.
- All equipment with water line connections have been flushed, cleaned and sanitized.
- No imminent health hazard exists.

Contact BCHS at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org) or chs@houstontx.gov

- For approval to open if your establishment did not follow a BCHS-accepted plan for an interruption in water service.***
  
  **OR**
  
  If your establishment closed due to another imminent health hazard.

**THE BUREAU OF CONSUMER HEALTH SERVICES MUST GRANT APPROVAL FOR YOUR ESTABLISHMENT TO RESUME FOOD OPERATIONS.**

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- If and only if your establishment followed a BCHS-accepted plan for an interruption in water service:
  - Normal operations may be resumed once the requirements are met.
  - Notify BCHS that normal operations are being resumed.

Please contact the Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) with any questions or concerns

4/26/2021