

Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Board of Registration in Dentistry  
Guidance for Dental Offices During “Boil Water Order”  
Issued on May 1, 2010

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Board of Registration in Dentistry issue this advisory for dental practices operating within communities affected by the “Boil Water Order” issued by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on May 1, 2010.

- The list of affected communities keeps changing so all dental practices are advised to call 211 or get updates on the list of affected communities by visiting the MWRA website at <http://www.mwra.state.ma.us/>
- Dental practices operating in a community affected by the boil water order must assess their ability to practice safely during the advisory period based on the situation at each practice location. Some procedures in the dental office may be easily accomplished by substituting bottled or boiled water, or, if you have water supply reservoirs that are isolated from the domestic water supply. However, if you can only rely on the domestic water supply there are procedures that should not be performed while the boil water order is in effect.
- Any procedures where potentially contaminated tap water could be instilled into patients' mouths should be avoided. This is applicable for all patients.
- Dentists, hygienists, and dental auxiliary personnel must verify the water source for each piece of equipment being used to deliver oral health care including handpieces and ultrasonic scalers to confirm the water source **before** using the equipment or instrument to deliver health care or sanitize dental equipment or the dental office environment.
- Bottled, boiled or distilled water must be substituted whenever tap water is normally used as an additive to dental solutions.
- A link to the CDC that provides information for dental offices during and after a boil water order is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/infectioncontrol/factsheets/boilwater.htm>
- Dentists should consult with the manufacturer of their dental unit or water delivery system to determine the best method for maintaining acceptable water quality.
- Dentists, dental hygienists, and auxiliary personnel should review the CDC's 2003 Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health Care Settings, especially sections pertaining to Dental Unit Water Lines (DUWL) and the safe delivery of oral health care during and immediately following a boil water order <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5217a1.htm>

- General Guidance to Dental Practices in Affected Communities:
  1. All dental office staff should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to disinfect after washing their hands.
  2. Where possible, bottled or boiled water should be used to wash hands – an alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be used whenever tap water and soap are used to wash hands.
  3. Boiled water must be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute to be safe for drinking, brushing teeth, or rinsing mouths.
  4. Dental delivery units equipped with cuspidors and water dispensers which utilize tap water should not be used during the boil water order. Patients should be given bottled, distilled or boiled water to rinse their mouth, dentures, partials, or any other dental prosthesis prior to use.
  5. Only bottled, distilled or boiled water must be used for:
    - Drinking
    - Brushing teeth
    - Rinsing mouths, dentures, partials, or any other dental prosthesis
    - Cleaning and rinsing instruments prior to sterilization
    - Flushing dental unit water lines
  6. Bottled or boiled water should be used in ultrasonic cleaners used for instruments, handpieces, burs, dentures, impression trays, etc.
  7. Sterile solutions (e.g., sterile saline or sterile water) should be used as a coolant/irrigation in performance of surgical procedures.
- Dental practices may also find information at [www.osap.org](http://www.osap.org) and [www.hivdent.org](http://www.hivdent.org), [www.massdental.org](http://www.massdental.org) or <http://www.massdental.org/>
- General consumer information regarding precautions for water usage is available on the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection website at [www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/boilordr.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/boilordr.htm)
- Consumer Fact Sheets are being sent out and will be available on the DPH website. Fact Sheets in Spanish and Portuguese will be forthcoming early this week. This Fact Sheet, "[Why is there a Boil Water Order for Eastern Massachusetts.](#)" is for your use and distribution to patients, families and staff.
- "Boil Water" public information materials are now posted under "News and Updates" on the DPH Home page and HHS home page at [http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2modulechunk&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Government&L2=Departments+and+Divisions&L3=Department+of+Public+Health&sid=Eohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dph\\_g\\_mwra\\_water\\_break&csid=Eohhs2](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2modulechunk&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Government&L2=Departments+and+Divisions&L3=Department+of+Public+Health&sid=Eohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dph_g_mwra_water_break&csid=Eohhs2)

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