



Guidelines for Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes During a Temporary Water Interruption

An interruption is when no water is provided to the home. In some situations, an interruption in water supply may lead to the issuance of a Boil Water Advisory until the water supply returns.

Important: If your water has been interrupted, even for a short time, you should confirm the safety of the water supply with water utility services prior to resumption of use.

This fact sheet is a guideline only. Special procedures may be necessary and additional instructions may be provided.

If you are experiencing a water interruption, please notify Ottawa Public Health by calling 613-580-6744 (or 3-1-1 afterhours and ask to speak to the public health inspector on-call) for additional guidance.

Planning for a loss in water supply:

- Develop an emergency response plan.
- Acquire a supply of temporary insulated containers with spigots to be used as temporary hand sink stations.
- Prepare a 72-hour plan for the supply of potable (drinkable) water (For example, bottled or hauling company).
- Prepare a 72-hour food plan that includes minimal food handling and/or catered food with disposable cutlery, cups and plates.
- Maintain a list of important contacts in emergency response plan including a licensed water hauling truck company, licensed garbage disposal company and several inspected, commercial catering kitchens.

Immediately following a loss in water supply:

- Identify whether the loss in water supply is caused by the facility or from the municipality.
- If you are experiencing a [power outage, visit Ottawa Public Health's Severe Weather – Keeping You Healthy and Safe web page](#).
- Initiate emergency response plan as per facility's internal policies and procedures.



- Immediately notify Ottawa Public Health during business hours. Call 3-1-1 and ask to speak with the on-call public health inspector after hours or on weekends.
 - If water supply loss is caused by the private water system (well), notify the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in addition to Ottawa Public Health.
- Notify the fire suppressant services vendor.
- Communicate with residents and family about the status of the water interruption.

What to do during a water service interruption:

Drinking water

- Secure potable (drinkable) water. Switch to bottled water or contact a licensed water hauling truck company to provide potable water.
- Use only potable water for any use (For example, to shower, bathe, and brush teeth).

Food preparation

- Best practice is to obtain an approved external caterer to supply food and utensils for use or consider preparing food at an incubator kitchen or a sister-site kitchen.
- Speak to Ottawa Public Health for approval prior to using alternate-source food for use during water service interruptions.
- Use only potable (drinkable) water during food preparation. Switch to bottled water or contact a licensed water hauling company.
- Restrict menu items to foods that require minimal handling and food preparation.
- Water used to wash fruits, vegetables, or as an ingredient in a ready-to-eat food product, such as coffee, juice, Jello or ice must be from one of the sources. For example, bottled or hauling company.
- Water fountains, vending, pop and ice machines must not be used and made inaccessible.
- Consider switching to single-use disposable cutlery and plates.
- Do not use the mechanical dishwasher or compartment sink for dishwashing.

Handwashing

- Place temporary hand sinks at all current hand sinks in the kitchen and on all floors for hand hygiene for food safety and clinical care.



- Heat potable water and place in an insulated container with a spigot to keep the water warm. Ensure liquid hand soap and single-use paper towel is available for use at all handwashing sinks and on all floors.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70% isopropyl alcohol) after handwashing on dried hands.
- Post handwashing directions at all sinks including in kitchen, care floors and washrooms.

Flushing toilets

- Consider arranging for portable toilet(s) to be delivered to the facility if service interruption longer than two hours; or
- Designate communal washrooms for staff where an alternate source of water or non-potable water is available for flushing toilets. Mark non-potable water as ‘non-potable water: this water is not safe to drink’.
- If water is not available for flushing toilets for residents, do not flush toilets for urination only. For defecation, place garbage bags in toilets or commodes. Arrange for a licensed garbage disposal company for removal.

Clinical care

- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70 per cent isopropyl alcohol) after handwashing on dried hands.

Pools and spa operation:

- Close pools, spas and changerooms until water is restored.

Hairdressing salon operation:

- Close salon until water is restored.

When water is restored:

- Receive clearance to use water from municipality.
- Follow direction from Ottawa Public Health.
- If the water interruption is less than two hours, run all faucets for 5 to 10 minutes. If the water interruption is more than two hours, run all faucets for 30 minutes to reduce the risk of [legionella](#). Visit [Ottawa Public Health’s Legionellosis web page](#).
- Notify the fire suppressant services vendor.
- Flush toilets.



Who to call for additional information:

- Call 613-580-6744 (or 3-1-1 afterhours, weekends and holidays) and ask to speak with a public health inspector from Ottawa Public Health.
- Call 2-1-1 or call 1-877-330-3213 (toll-free) for information on provincial government and local community-based health and social services.
- Call 9-1-1 for a life-threatening emergency.
- The following radio stations broadcast live, local announcements in the City of Ottawa: AM 580 CFRA, FM 91.5 CBC Radio One, FM 90.7 Ici-Radio Canada (French) and FM 97.9 CHIN Ottawa (multilingual).
- Call 1-800-565-4923 to speak with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.