



## 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](http://www.houstonconsumer.org), [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto: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

registering thermometer.

- 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](mailto: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

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