



**Agriculture  
and Markets**

## **TEMPORARY WATER INTERRUPTION GUIDANCE FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS 2023**

Guidance created by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets'  
Division of Food Safety and Inspection

Water interruption (no water) is considered a water supply emergency. Water used for food processing or handwashing purposes shall be obtained from an approved water source that has been regulated by law. Approved alternate water sources include bottled drinking water, water provided by a New York State-certified bulk water provider (aka "Department of Health (DOH) approved water hauler"), or potable water provided by an emergency response agency during a natural disaster. Containers used to transport water during emergency situations must be clean and sanitized prior to filling.

Water or ice from a suspect or non-potable water supply shall never be used as an ingredient, in any form, in the manufacture of any food product or come into contact with foods, ingredients or food-contact surfaces. Foods, including ice and beverages, manufactured with the contaminated water must be discarded.

In the event of a water interruption emergency, a food establishment must take the appropriate actions to safeguard the public they serve and their employees.

- **The food establishment should conduct a risk assessment of the emergency.**
  - determine the activities that require water (food processing, handwashing, toilet facilities, equipment cleaning, ice manufacturing)
  
- **The food establishment should implement measures to control the identified risks.**
  - Consider temporarily ceasing all food processing operations.
  - Use potable water from approved sources and/or from commercially bottled water.
  - Handwashing stations shall be set up for all food preparation operations using potable water from approved sources and/or from commercially bottled water, soap, and hand drying device. Hand sanitizers shall be used after handwashing.
  - Portable toilet facilities may be used when provided with adequate hand washing facilities (as mentioned above) and must be accessible to employees during all hours of operation. Cease all food processing operations if toilet facilities are not available.
  - Limit food processing operations.

- Use single serve utensils.
- Obtain and use prewashed packaged produce.
- Use frozen/canned produce.
- Drinking water – only consume potable water from approved sources and/or from commercially bottled water.
- Ice making - use ice prepared before water interruption. Purchase commercially packaged ice.
- Cleaning and sanitizing of equipment - use potable water from approved sources and/or from commercially bottled water.

<b>OPERATION</b>	<b>WHEN WATER IS LIMITED OR UNAVAILABLE</b>	<b>WHEN WATER SUPPLY IS CONTAMINATED</b>
Handwashing by employees	Use water from an approved alternate source.	Use water from an approved alternate source. (Any alternative accepted for employee hand-washing must fully meet the need of regular and effective handwashing by employees). Temporary handwashing stations can be set up with water from approved sources. Handwashing should be followed with a hand sanitizer.
Cleaning and sanitizing tableware, kitchenware, vending machine components, equipment and contact surfaces	Use only single-service tableware and single use kitchenware.  Use water from or take components to a department-approved alternate source elsewhere for cleaning.	Use only single-service tableware and single use kitchenware.  Use water from or take components to a department-approved alternate source elsewhere for cleaning.
Cleaning floors, walls and other non-food contact surfaces	Use waterless cleaning methods.	Use nonpotable water if approved by the Division of Food Safety and Inspection.
Storing dispensing utensils in dipper well	Store utensils in food.	Store utensils in food.

<b>OPERATION</b>	<b>WHEN WATER IS LIMITED OR UNAVAILABLE</b>	<b>WHEN WATER SUPPLY IS CONTAMINATED</b>
Using garbage grinders	Discontinue use and dispose of garbage in proper containers together with other refuse.	Use nonpotable water if approved by the Division of Food Safety and Inspection.
Flushing toilets	<p>Use adjacent approved facilities which are readily available.</p> <p>Use waterless toilets (portable toilets).</p> <p>Limit toilet use to employees only.</p> <p>Use water from an alternate source.</p>	<p>Use adjacent approved facilities which are readily available.</p> <p>Use waterless toilets (portable toilets).</p> <p>Use nonpotable water.</p> <p>Use water from an alternate source.</p>
Preparing carbonated and other cold/hot beverages	<p>Replace with bottled or canned beverages.</p> <p>Use water from an approved alternate source.</p>	<p>Replace with bottled or canned beverages.</p> <p>Use water from an approved alternate source.</p> <p>Disconnect water line to post-mix carbonated and other hard plumbed beverage machines, drain and disinfect lines prior to reuse.</p>
Thawing of frozen foods	Thaw only in refrigerator, or as part of cooking process if food weighs less than three pounds.	Thaw only in refrigerator, or as part of cooking process if food weighs less than three pounds.
Washing produce	<p>Obtain and use prewashed packaged produce.</p> <p>Use produce washed prior to emergency. (Note: May be difficult to know if product was not washed with contaminated water.)</p>	<p>Obtain and use prewashed packaged produce.</p> <p>Use produce washed prior to emergency. (Note: May be difficult to know if product was not washed with contaminated water.)</p>

<b>OPERATION</b>	<b>WHEN WATER IS LIMITED OR UNAVAILABLE</b>	<b>WHEN WATER SUPPLY IS CONTAMINATED</b>
Washing produce (continued)	<p>Use frozen or canned produce.</p> <p>Wash fresh produce with water from an approved alternate source.</p>	<p>Use frozen or canned produce.</p> <p>Wash fresh produce with water from an approved alternate source.</p>
Spraying, dipping and soaking of produce	Use water from an approved alternate source.	Use water from an approved alternate source.
Preparing and cooking food, including reconstituting dried food	<p>Use only food that was prepared prior to the interruption.</p> <p>Discontinue sale of prepared foods.</p> <p>Use prepared food from an approved alternate source.</p> <p>Use water from an approved alternate source.</p>	<p>Use only food that was prepared prior to the interruption.</p> <p>Discontinue sale of prepared foods.</p> <p>Use prepared food from an approved alternate source.</p> <p>Use water from an approved alternate source.</p>
Ice-making	<p>Use ice prepared before interruption.</p> <p>Use ice from commercially approved facilities outside of the affected area.</p> <p>Do not use ice for preparing or serving beverages.</p> <p>Purchase packaged potable ice.</p>	<p>Disconnect machine from supply; drain and disinfect equipment prior to re-use.</p> <p>Use ice from commercially approved facilities outside of the affected area.</p> <p>Do not use ice for preparing or serving beverages.</p> <p>Purchase packaged potable ice.</p>