COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING BWO'S & COLIFORM MCL'S

1. Is potentially contaminated water (where Cryptosporidium is not the significant contaminant) safe for washing dishes or clothes?

   Yes, if you rinse **hand-washed dishes** for a minute in dilute bleach (1 tablespoon per gallon of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry.

   Yes, if you clean your dishes **in a home dishwasher** using the hot wash (170^{o}) and dry cycles. Again, allow dishes to completely dry.

   Yes, for **commercial dishwashers** if you use a NSF listed washer manufactured with either a hot wash (170^{o}) or a disinfectant rinse.

   It is safe to wash clothes in tap water.

2. Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?

   The water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, so long as care is taken not to swallow water. Children and disabled individuals should have their bathing supervised to ensure water is not ingested. Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who have recent surgical wounds, are immunosuppressed, or suffering from chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water for cleansing until the advisory is lifted.

3. How should I wash my hands during a boil water advisory?

   Based on the current conditions of the affected public water supplies, vigorous hand washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. The use of boiled, treated, or bottled water for hand washing is usually only necessary when the water supply is seriously contaminated (E. coli present).

4. What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?

   Even if someone has consumed potentially contaminated water from either a public water system or a private well before they were aware of the boil water advisory, the likelihood of becoming ill is very low. Anyone experiencing symptoms of the gastroenteritis, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should seek medical attention.

5. What is the proper way to disinfect my water so that it is safe to drink?

   The preferred method of treatment is boiling. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Bring water to a full ROLLING boil for at least 1 minute to kill most infectious organisms.

   If boiling water is not possible (power outage) potentially contaminated water may be treated with chlorine. Mix six drops (1/8 teaspoon) of unscented, ordinary household bleach (5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water. Mix the solution thoroughly, let stand for about thirty minutes. To disinfect using iodine put eight drops of 2% tincture of iodine in one quart of water. Allow the water to stand at least 30 minutes before it is used. This approach is not appropriate where there is any chance of sewage contamination. Such disinfection would only be marginally effective against Giardia and does not protect against Cryptosporidium contamination. If there is a possibility of sewage contamination, bottled or trucked water should be used.

6. What infectious organisms might be present in contaminated water?

   Disease transmission from contaminated water occurs principally by ingesting water. The major organisms of concern are protozoa such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium, and bacteria, such as Shigella, E. coli and viruses. These organisms primarily affect the gastrointestinal system, causing diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, and vomiting with or without fever. {LHD/DO may offer more specific information based on details of the particular situation}. Most of these illnesses are not usually serious or life threatening except in the elderly, the very young or those who are immunocompromised.