

## DRINKING WATER WARNING

[Insert Water System Name] water is contaminated with *E. coli* bacteria

### BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING

#### What happened?

*E. coli* bacteria were found in our water system on [insert date]. These bacteria can make you sick, and are a particular concern for people with weakened immune systems. As our customers, you have a right to know what happened and what we are doing to correct this situation. [Provide specific information about the situation here].

#### What should I do?

**DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST.** Bring all water to a boil, let it boil for one minute and let it cool before using, or use bottled water. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation **until further notice**. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.

People with severely compromised immune system, infants, or the elderly may be at increased risk and should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791, or contact Oregon Health Authority Drinking Water Services at (971) 673-0405. If you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.

#### What does this mean?

*E. coli* are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Human pathogens in these wastes can cause short-term effects, such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a greater health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely-compromised immune systems.

The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

#### What is being done?

[Describe corrective actions taken]. We will inform you when tests show no bacteria and you no longer need to boil your water. We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated time frame] and will provide information about any additional steps you should be taking.

For more information, please contact [name of contact] at [phone number] or [mailing address].

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

This notice is being sent to you by [water system name].  
State Water System ID#: \_\_\_\_\_.

Date distributed: \_\_\_\_\_

# Instructions for Public Notice after Exceeding MCL for *E. Coli*

## Template on Reverse

Exceeding the maximum contaminant level for *E. coli* requires a Tier 1 public notice. You must provide public notice to persons served as soon as practical but within 24 hours after you learn of the violation [OAR 333-061-0042(3)]. During this time, you must also contact the Oregon Health Authority at 971-673-0405 and your local health department or Department of Agriculture health specialist. You may have to modify the template if you also have high nitrate levels or other chemical MCL violations because boiling water could increase concentrations of chemical contaminant. You must use one or more of the following methods to deliver the notice to consumers [OAR 333-061-0042(3)]:

- Radio
- Television
- Hand or direct delivery
- Posting in conspicuous locations

You may need to use additional methods (for example, newspaper, delivery of multiple copies to hospitals, clinics, or apartment buildings), since notice must be provided in a manner reasonably calculated to reach all persons served.

The notice on the reverse is appropriate for hand delivery or a newspaper notice. However, you may wish to modify it before using it for a radio or TV notice. If you do, you must still include all required elements and leave the health effects language in italics unchanged. This language is mandatory [OAR 333-061-0042(4)]. If you post or hand deliver, print your notice on letterhead, if you have it.

### **What happened?**

Provide a description of the situation, including the number of samples with *E. coli* bacteria present and where they were collected.

### **Population Served**

Make sure it is clear who is served by your water system--you may need to list the areas you serve.

### **What Should I Do?**

This section provides guidance to water users and must not be changed except when you are advised to do so by your regulatory official.

### **What Does This Mean?**

This section provides required health effects language and must not be changed.

### **What is being done?**

In your notice, describe the corrective actions you are taking. Listed below are some steps commonly taken at water systems with *E. coli* contamination, use one or more of the following actions if appropriate or develop your own:

- We are chlorinating and flushing the water system.
- We are switching to an alternate drinking water source.
- We are increasing sampling for coliform bacteria to determine the source of the contamination.
- We are repairing the wellhead seal.
- We are repairing the storage tank.
- We are restricting water intake from the river/lake/reservoir to prevent additional bacteria from entering the water system and restricting water use to emergencies.

### **After Issuing the Notice**

Send a copy of each type of notice and a certification that you have met all the public notice requirements to the Oregon Health Authority within ten days from the time you issue the notice [OAR 333-061-0040(1)].

It is recommended that you notify health professionals in the area of the violation. People may call their doctors with questions about how the violation may affect their health, and the doctors should have the information they need to respond appropriately. In addition, health professionals, including dentists, use tap water during their procedures and need to know of contamination so they can use bottled water.

It is advised to issue a "problem corrected" notice to consumers when the violation is resolved.