

STRATHMERE LODGE

Emergency Management Program

BOIL WATER / DRINKING WATER ADVISORY RESPONSE PLAN

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this Plan is to establish a safe and coordinated response to a Boil Water Advisory or other drinking water advisory affecting Strathmere Lodge.

The Plan is intended to:

- protect residents, staff, visitors and others from exposure to unsafe drinking water;
 - prevent use of affected water for drinking and other unsafe purposes;
 - maintain adequate hydration and resident care;
 - ensure a reliable alternative potable water supply;
 - provide clear departmental responsibilities;
 - maintain food safety and infection prevention and control;
 - ensure appropriate communication; and
 - safely restore normal water use following rescission of the advisory.
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2. SCOPE

This Plan applies when Strathmere Lodge's municipal water supply is subject to:

- a **Boil Water Advisory**;
- a **Drinking Water Advisory / Do Not Consume Advisory**; or
- another advisory or direction restricting the use of drinking water.

This Plan assumes that running water remains available.

Where the Home experiences a significant **loss of water supply**, the applicable **Loss of Essential Services Response Plan** shall also be activated.

3. TYPES OF DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES

3.1 Boil Water Advisory

A Boil Water Advisory is generally issued because of actual or potential **microbiological contamination**.

During a Boil Water Advisory, affected tap water shall not be used for drinking or other specified potable water purposes unless treated in accordance with the issuing authority's instructions.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) identifies drinking, food/beverage preparation, making ice, washing fruits and vegetables and brushing teeth among the uses requiring boiled or otherwise safe water.

3.2 Drinking Water / Do Not Consume Advisory

A Drinking Water Advisory may be issued where **chemical contamination** is suspected or confirmed.

Boiling chemically contaminated water does not make it safe and may increase the concentration of the contaminant.

Use commercially bottled or otherwise approved potable water and follow MLHU/issuing authority instructions.

3.3 Do Not Use Advisory

Where authorities direct that tap water **not be used**, the Home shall discontinue affected uses of the municipal water supply in accordance with the specific instructions received.

This may include uses normally permitted during a Boil Water Advisory, such as bathing or handwashing.

SAFETY ALERT – CONFIRM THE ADVISORY

Do not assume that boiling makes the water safe.

Upon notification, immediately determine:

WHAT type of advisory has been issued?

WHAT uses are prohibited?

WHAT alternative water source is required?

The instructions of MLHU, the municipality and/or other responsible authority take precedence over the general provisions of this Plan.

4. PLAN ACTIVATION AND INCIDENT COMMAND

4.1 Activation

This Plan shall be activated upon confirmed notification that a drinking water advisory affects Strathmere Lodge.

Notification may be received from:

- Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU);
- Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc;
- the municipal water system/operator;
- provincial authorities; or
- another authorized emergency notification system.

Where information is uncertain, the Charge Nurse shall verify the advisory through an authoritative source.

4.2 Incident Command

The **Charge Nurse (RN)** shall assume initial Incident Command after hours until relieved by the Administrator or designate.

The Incident Commander shall:

- confirm the nature and scope of the advisory;
 - determine prohibited and permitted water uses;
 - notify appropriate leadership and departments;
 - ensure unsafe water use is immediately stopped;
 - assess potable water inventory;
 - arrange additional potable water where required;
 - ensure residents continue to receive adequate fluids;
 - coordinate communications;
 - monitor the status of the advisory; and
 - coordinate recovery when the advisory is lifted.
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5. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Upon confirmation of an advisory:

1. CONFIRM

Determine:

- type of advisory;
- geographic area affected;
- effective time;
- permitted/prohibited water uses;
- instructions from MLHU/water authority.

2. NOTIFY

Immediately notify:

- Administrator;
- Director of Resident Care;
- Environmental Services Manager;
- Dietary Manager/designate;
- IPAC Lead;
- Resident Home Areas;
- other affected departments.

3. STOP UNSAFE WATER USE

Immediately prevent use of affected tap water for prohibited purposes.

4. POST SIGNAGE

Post clear notices at affected:

- resident sinks;
- public washrooms;
- staff areas;
- Dietary areas;
- beverage stations;
- other relevant water outlets.

5. DISCONTINUE PLUMBED CONSUMPTION EQUIPMENT

Take affected:

- ice machines;
- drinking water dispensers;
- beverage machines;
- other equipment using untreated municipal water

out of service.

6. ASSESS POTABLE WATER

Determine:

- current bottled water inventory;
- anticipated resident requirements;
- Dietary requirements;
- expected duration;
- need for immediate replenishment.

6. EMERGENCY POTABLE WATER SUPPLY

6.1 On-Site Preparedness Standard

Strathmere Lodge shall endeavour to maintain a minimum emergency inventory of approximately:

1,200 LITRES OF COMMERCIALY BOTTLED POTABLE WATER

This represents:

- **960 litres** — 72-hour resident drinking water supply based on 160 residents × 2 litres/day × 3 days; plus
- approximately **240 litres** contingency for essential resident care uses.

The 1,200-litre quantity is a **Strathmere Lodge emergency preparedness standard**, not a prescribed Ontario Long-Term Care regulatory quantity.

It does **not** represent the total potential water requirement for all Dietary, staff, cleaning and operational purposes.

6.2 Emergency Replenishment

Strathmere Lodge has an established arrangement with **Carruthers Water Delivery** for delivery of additional potable water.

Upon activation, Environmental Services/Incident Command shall determine whether additional water should be ordered.

Do not wait until the bottled water inventory is nearly exhausted.

Consider:

- anticipated advisory duration;
- current inventory;
- resident consumption;
- Dietary requirements;
- staff requirements;
- clinical requirements;
- availability and delivery time of additional supply.

Additional commercially bottled water shall also be procured where required.

6.3 Storage and Distribution

Emergency water shall:

- be stored in sanitary conditions;
- be protected from contamination;
- remain within applicable expiry/best before requirements where relevant;
- be rotated as appropriate;
- be distributed in a manner preventing cross-contamination.

Because water is heavy, storage locations and shelving shall be appropriate for the quantity stored.

7. RESIDENT CARE AND NURSING

Registered staff shall ensure residents continue to receive adequate fluids.

Safe potable water shall be used for:

- drinking;
- medication administration where water is required;
- oral/dental care;
- preparation of resident-specific beverages;
- other clinical uses requiring potable water.

Resident fluid intake shall continue to be monitored in accordance with individual care requirements.

Registered staff shall identify residents at increased risk of dehydration or complications, including residents:

- requiring thickened fluids;
- requiring increased fluid monitoring;
- receiving enteral nutrition;
- with swallowing difficulties;
- with conditions affecting fluid balance;
- requiring specialized clinical water use.

Resident-specific clinical requirements shall be addressed in consultation with the appropriate clinical team members.

8. DIETARY SERVICES

Dietary Services shall immediately discontinue use of unsafe tap water for purposes prohibited by the advisory.

Safe potable water shall be used as required for:

- food preparation;
- beverages;
- coffee and tea;
- soups and other foods containing added water;
- washing fruits and vegetables;
- reconstituting foods;

- nutritional supplements requiring water;
- other food contact uses specified by Public Health.

Any ice, beverages or foods prepared with potentially contaminated water after the relevant contamination period shall be assessed and discarded where required. Health Canada specifically advises discarding ice, beverages and uncooked foods prepared with potentially contaminated tap water.

Dishwashing

The Dietary Manager shall confirm that the commercial dishwasher can continue to be safely used under the conditions of the advisory.

Health Canada guidance permits dishwashers during a typical non-outbreak Boiled Water Advisory where appropriate sanitation is achieved; its guidance identifies a final rinse of at least 65°C or a sanitizing cycle.

Where there is uncertainty, Dietary shall follow MLHU direction.

Disposable service ware may be used where necessary.

9. ICE MACHINES AND BEVERAGE EQUIPMENT

Immediately discontinue use of affected:

- ice machines;
- water dispensers;
- fountain beverage systems;
- coffee/beverage equipment directly supplied with unsafe municipal water;
- other plumbed food service equipment as applicable.

Do not use existing ice where contamination may have occurred.

Use commercially manufactured ice from an approved source or ice made from safe potable water.

Equipment shall remain out of service until the advisory has been lifted and required flushing, cleaning and sanitizing have been completed.

10. HAND HYGIENE, BATHING AND PERSONAL CARE

The response shall reflect the **specific type of advisory**.

During a typical Boil Water Advisory, Health Canada guidance indicates that tap water may generally continue to be used for proper handwashing; bathing may also generally continue provided water is not swallowed, although additional precautions may apply during a waterborne outbreak or for particularly vulnerable individuals.

Therefore:

- follow MLHU instructions;
- maintain routine hand hygiene unless otherwise directed;
- use alcohol-based hand rub where appropriate;
- prevent residents from drinking bath/shower water;
- use safe potable water for oral care;
- provide additional precautions for vulnerable residents where indicated.

During a **Do Not Use** advisory, tap water shall not be used for handwashing, bathing or other prohibited purposes. Public Health guidance should determine alternatives.

The Lodge's IPAC Lead shall provide additional direction where required.

11. HOUSEKEEPING AND LAUNDRY

During a typical Boil Water Advisory, routine laundry and many environmental cleaning activities may generally continue unless otherwise directed.

Housekeeping/Laundry shall:

- follow MLHU/IPAC instructions;
- prevent unsafe water from being used where potable water is required;
- ensure cleaning/disinfecting products are prepared according to manufacturer instructions;
- use safe water where product instructions require potable water;
- modify procedures where required.

During a Do Not Use Advisory, affected water shall not be used until specifically authorized.

12. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Incident Commander / Charge Nurse

- Confirm the advisory.
- Activate the Plan.
- Notify departments/leadership.
- Ensure unsafe water use stops.
- Maintain resident care.
- Coordinate communications.
- Monitor the emergency.

Director of Resident Care

- Oversee resident care implications.
- Ensure clinical requirements are addressed.
- Support Resident Home Areas.
- Coordinate physician/Nurse Practitioner involvement where necessary.

IPAC Lead

- Provide infection control guidance.
- Liaise with Public Health as appropriate.
- Advise on hand hygiene, resident care, cleaning and equipment.
- Support recovery procedures.

Environmental Services Manager

- Assess potable water inventory.
- Coordinate emergency water delivery.
- Liaise with municipal/building services as appropriate.
- Coordinate signage and affected fixtures/equipment.
- Coordinate flushing and building system recovery.

Dietary Manager

- Protect food and beverage safety.
- Discontinue unsafe water uses.
- Arrange safe food preparation.
- manage ice/beverage equipment;
- coordinate Dietary potable water requirements.

Registered Staff

- Ensure residents receive safe drinking water.
- Maintain hydration.
- use safe water for medication/oral/clinical purposes;
- monitor vulnerable residents.

PSWs

- Provide residents with safe drinking water.
- assist with hydration;
- follow personal care restrictions;
- prevent residents from drinking affected tap water;
- report concerns.

All Staff

- Follow posted restrictions.
- Do not remove advisory signage.
- Do not use affected fixtures/equipment contrary to instructions.
- Report unsafe practices immediately.

13. COMMUNICATIONS AND SIGNAGE

The Home shall provide frequent and ongoing information as required to:

- residents;
- Substitute Decision Makers (SDMs);
- staff;
- volunteers;
- students;
- caregivers;
- Residents' Council;
- Family Council.

Ontario's emergency plan regulation (Ont. Reg. 246/22) specifically requires communication at the beginning of an emergency, when significant status changes occur, and when the emergency is over.

Communications shall explain:

- type of advisory;
- actions being taken;
- restrictions affecting residents;
- alternative water arrangements;
- significant changes;

- when the advisory is lifted.

14. LIFTING OF THE ADVISORY AND RECOVERY

Strathmere Lodge shall not declare the water safe merely because it appears, smells or tastes normal.

The advisory shall remain in effect until rescinded by the appropriate authority.

MLHU indicates that a Boil Water Advisory is lifted when the Medical Officer of Health is satisfied the water is safe following required laboratory testing.

Following advisory lifting:

Environmental Services shall coordinate:

- flushing of affected water lines/outlets as directed;
- flushing/cleaning of equipment;
- replacement of applicable filters;
- restoration of water dispensers;
- cleaning and sanitizing ice machines;
- discarding potentially contaminated ice;
- restoration of beverage equipment;
- removal of signage only after required recovery actions are complete.

Dietary shall:

- clean/sanitize affected food service equipment;
- restore ice/beverage equipment when cleared;
- dispose of remaining potentially unsafe products;
- resume normal operations.

Nursing/Resident Home Areas shall:

- resume normal water use once authorized;
- remove restrictions/signage as directed;
- communicate the all-clear to residents.

The Incident Commander shall communicate that the emergency is over.

15. DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING

Document:

- date/time advisory received;
- issuing authority;
- type of advisory;
- restrictions;
- Plan activation;
- notifications;
- potable water inventory;
- additional water ordered/delivered;
- resident care impacts;
- significant operational issues;
- communications;
- time/date advisory rescinded;
- flushing/sanitization/recovery actions;
- declaration that emergency operations have ended.

Any resident illness potentially associated with contaminated water shall be clinically assessed and documented.

The Administrator/DRC/IPAC Lead shall determine applicable Public Health, Ministry of Long-Term Care or other reporting requirements.

16. TRAINING, TESTING AND REVIEW

Staff, volunteers and students shall receive training regarding this Plan appropriate to their responsibilities before performing their responsibilities, and at least annually thereafter.

The **Boil Water Advisory Response Plan shall be tested annually**, including relevant arrangements with entities/resources involved in the response.

A tabletop exercise would be entirely appropriate.

For example:

9:30 a.m. – MLHU advises Strathmere Lodge that a Boil Water Advisory is immediately in effect following a municipal water main break. The duration is unknown.

The exercise can test:

- activation;

- departmental notification;
- signage;
- bottled water inventory;
- Carruthers water delivery arrangement;
- resident hydration;
- Dietary response;
- ice/beverage equipment;
- Public Health communication;
- recovery.

The Plan shall be evaluated:

- at least annually; and
- within 30 days after an actual activation.

Entities involved in the response shall be provided an opportunity for feedback following activation.

APPENDIX A – BOIL WATER ADVISORY QUICK RESPONSE GUIDE

WATER ADVISORY RECEIVED

1. STOP — CONFIRM TYPE

BOIL WATER → microbial concern; safe bottled/appropriately boiled water.

DO NOT CONSUME / DRINKING WATER ADVISORY → boiling may **NOT** make water safe.

DO NOT USE → stop all uses specified by the issuing authority.

2. NOTIFY

Charge Nurse → Administrator → DRC → Environmental Services → Dietary → IPAC → Resident Home Areas.

3. PROTECT

Immediately stop affected tap water use for:

Drinking • Medications • Oral Care • Food • Beverages • Ice • Fruit/Vegetable Washing

4. DISABLE

Ice machines • Water dispensers • Plumbed beverage equipment

5. WATER SUPPLY

On-site preparedness target: 1,200 litres

Assess inventory immediately.

Contact emergency potable water supplier early if additional supply is required.

6. RESIDENTS

Maintain hydration.

Identify high-risk residents.

Use safe water for resident care purposes requiring potable water.

7. DIETARY

Use safe potable water.

Assess/discard affected ice/food/beverages.

Confirm dishwasher requirements.

8. COMMUNICATE

Residents • SDMs • Staff • Councils/others as required.

9. ALL CLEAR

Do not resume normal use until the advisory is officially rescinded.

Flush → clean → sanitize → replace filters as directed → restore equipment.

APPENDIX B – WATER USE QUICK REFERENCE

Use	Typical Boil Water Advisory
Resident drinking	Bottled/safe treated water
Medication administration	Bottled/safe treated water
Brushing teeth/oral care	Bottled/safe treated water
Food preparation	Bottled/safe treated water
Coffee/tea/beverages	Safe water only
Ice	Safe water only
Wash fruits/vegetables	Safe water only
Ice machines	Take out of service
Plumbed beverage equipment	Take out of service if affected
Handwashing	Generally permitted during typical Boil Water Advisory; follow MLHU/IPAC direction
Bathing/showering	Generally permitted with precautions during typical Boil Water Advisory; follow MLHU direction
Laundry	Generally permitted during typical Boil Water Advisory; follow MLHU direction
Commercial dishwasher	May be permitted with appropriate sanitizing conditions; verify
Do Not Consume Advisory	Follow issuing authority; safe alternative drinking water required
Do Not Use Advisory	Do not use affected tap water for prohibited purposes

When the specific advisory differs from this table, the directions of MLHU/the issuing authority take precedence.