



# *City of Cortland*

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[www.cityofcortland.org](http://www.cityofcortland.org)

**Service Director – Donald Wittman, P.E.**

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## **WATER BOIL ADVISORY**

The city is required to issue a water boil advisory when there is a drop in water pressure within the distribution system. The advisory is mandated when the pressure in the waterline drops below 20 psi. A boil alert typically occurs when a waterline is taken out of service for repair and the water line is drained. Advance notice of boil alerts will be issued to residents ahead of scheduled construction activities. However, emergency situations arise that make advance notice impossible. It should be noted that the majority of emergency waterline breaks can be repaired without a boil advisory. Breaks that require the line to be emptied for the repair will cause an advisory to be issued.

When an advisory affects a limited area, residents receive individual notification. The city will hang boil alert tags (red in color) on the front door of residences to inform residents of the advisory. A green tag is left on the door when the advisory is terminated. During a city-wide alert, notification is sent to the news media; television, radio and newspapers. Also, a notification will be placed on the scrolling news bar at [www.cityofcortland.org](http://www.cityofcortland.org), the city's official website.

During a boil advisory, residents are encouraged to bring water to a boil for two to three minutes prior to drinking or using water for cooking. A boil advisory does not mean that the water is contaminated, but due to the temporary lack of pressure in the system, water could backflow into the pipes. The water supply is chlorinated and offers protection to the residents, however, sensitive populations such as the elderly, children, or immune-compromised individuals are at an increased risk. Residents that are given advance notice of a boil advisory have the opportunity to store drinking water. However, advance notice is impossible during emergency repairs. Therefore, residents are encouraged to keep drinking water on hand for emergency boil alerts.

The city must perform bacteriological testing to terminate the boil advisory. After the waterline is repaired and the pressure is restored, a water sample from the distribution system is taken to a local lab. The lab processes the sample and performs the testing. A twenty-four hour incubation period is necessary to detect the presence of bacteria. A negative test result will terminate the boil advisory. A positive result will continue the boil advisory and require resampling. The boil advisory will remain in effect until a negative test result is obtained. The initial and each subsequent testing, if required, will each take a minimum of twenty-four hours. Therefore, a boil advisory can last anywhere from forty-eight (48) to ninety-six (96) hours, depending on the results of bacteriological sampling.