

Environmental Health Service

Guidance for Food Businesses: Operation of Commercial Coffee Machines and Dishwashers during Boil Water Notices

1.0 Background

Where a water supply intended for human consumption has been deemed as posing a danger to health, action must be taken immediately to protect the health of consumers.

Where the danger to health posed by the water supply is from contamination by microorganisms (e.g. bacteria, protozoa or viruses) this will most often require that a 'boil water notice' be imposed. In the case of public water supplies, for example, this is issued by Irish Water (or by a local authority acting on their behalf), following consultation with the Health Service Executive.

Boil Water Notices typically include advice that all water used for human consumption, preparation of food and beverages or making ice should be brought to a rolling boil. This approach is endorsed by e.g. the World Health Organisation (WHO/FWC/WSH/15.02). It provides clear easy-to-follow advice for the general population.

Nevertheless the microorganisms of concern in an Irish drinking water supply context are all inactivated at temperatures significantly below 100⁰C (the boiling point of water at sea level).

This gives scope to allow (subject to important conditions) continued use of certain appliances, such as commercial coffee making machines or dishwashers, without having to pre-boil the water used in these appliances.

This guidance note outlines, for food business operators, the circumstances in which some commercial appliances may be operated, without having to pre-boil the water feeding into them, during a boil water notice.

2.0 Recommendations applying for food businesses when a drinking water supply boil water advisory notice is in place

2.1 Machines dispensing hot drinks (e.g. tea / coffee machines): the temperature of the drink at dispensing point must be at least 75⁰C.

The food business operator must verify this for each appliance by appropriate temperature checks at or after each dispensing point of the machine.

2.2 Dishwashers / Glasswashers: final rinse cycles of these machines must be shown to achieve an instantaneous temperature of at least 75⁰C (or equivalent time-temperature combination e.g. held at a temperature of 70⁰C for at least 2 minutes).

The food business operator must be able to verify this for each appliance by appropriate temperature checks. Dishes and / or glasses washed by these devices must be air dried.

2.3 The general boil water advice from Irish Water / local authority must be followed for all other uses of the water supply.