

The Town of Norwell, in consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), is issuing an immediate boil water order for all residents and businesses using the Town water system after E. coli bacteria was detected during routine testing.

The Town of Norwell was notified on July 8 that a sample collected on July 7 tested positive for E. coli bacteria.

These bacteria can make you sick and are especially a concern for people with weakened immune systems. Bacterial contamination can occur when increased run-off enters the drinking water source (for example, following heavy rains). It can also happen due to a break in the distribution system (pipes) or a failure in the water treatment process.

As a result, residents are instructed to boil all water used for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, food preparation, and washing dishes until further notice. Boiled water should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute and then cooled before use.

Water system users should also discard all ice, beverages, uncooked foods, and formula made with tap water collected on or after July 7, 2026.

“This is a precautionary but urgent measure being taken to protect the health and safety of our residents,” said Town Administrator Chad Lovett. “We are working closely with all Town Departments and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to identify the source of the contamination and to resolve this issue as quickly as possible.”

Anyone who ingests contaminated water may become ill, experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, jaundice, headaches, and fatigue. Infants, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems are particularly vulnerable.

The Town of Norwell is actively investigating the cause of the contamination.

The Norwell Water Department will be flushing water mains and increasing chlorination. The Town will inform residents and businesses when tests show no bacteria and Town water system users no longer need to boil water.

The Town is issuing a Reverse 911 notification to all Norwell residents and businesses, and a wireless emergency alert through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to cellphones located within or

entering Norwell to ensure everyone affected is notified of the boil water notice.

The Town is also evaluating options for bottled water distribution and will provide additional information as soon as plans are finalized.

The Town Water Department anticipates resolving the problem within 48 hours.

For more information, please contact Howard Tufts of the Norwell Water Department at 781-659-8076 or HTufts@TownofNorwell.net.

General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available by emailing the EPA at safewater@epa.gov or by calling the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

If you have questions about drinking water regulations, you can contact the MassDEP Drinking Water Program at: program.director-dwp@mass.gov or 617-292-5770.

If you have any health-related questions, please contact your doctor or health care provider. For general public health inquiries, you can contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 617-624-5757.

Further updates will be posted on the Town's website.

Safety Tips

Food establishments must follow MA DPH procedures and the direction of their local board of health, which may be more stringent than the DPH guide. [Click here for MA Department of Public Health – Guidance for Emergency Action Planning for Retail Food Establishments.](#)

DEP recommends the following general precautions when a public health order is in effect:

- Do not drink the water without boiling it first or use bottled water. If you decide to boil your water, bring it to a rolling boil for at least one minute. You may cool the boiled water before using it. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.
- Discard any ice, juice, formula, stored water, and uncooked foods prepared with tap water during the period of concern.

- Use boiled water for: drinking, food preparation, mixing baby formula, making ice, washing food, manual utensil and equipment washing, rinsing, and sanitizing, brushing teeth, and any other activity involving the consumption of water.
- Childcare centers and schools should use only bottled or boiled water for mixing infant formulas, hand washing, mixing sanitizing solutions for diapering areas and surfaces such as tabletops and toys.
 - Adult employees should use hand sanitizer after washing their hands with tap water and soap. Do not use drinking fountains and discontinue the use of water play tables. Follow all guidance provided by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) and/or the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC).
- Retail food establishments must follow the guidance of the local board of health and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MassDPH). Wholesale food manufacturers must follow the guidance of MassDPH. Meat processing plants must follow the guidance of MassDPH and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Swimming pools, hot tubs, and spas that are operating properly, including routine monitoring for adequate disinfection levels, may continue to operate.