LOUISIANA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 5, 2008

Department of Health and Hospitals News Update

9/5/08 Update on Water Systems under Boil Advisory

BATON ROUGE - Hurricane Gustav has caused widespread power outages and damage to drinking water systems throughout Louisiana.

Click here for a list of water systems that are under boil advisories until further notice from the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH).

Click here for a list of drinking water systems that have water that is safe to drink.

If you live in an area under a boil advisory or you have lost water pressure at your tap, or if the water pressure is extremely low, State Health Officer Jimmy Guidry, MD, recommends that you disinfect your water by any one of the following methods prior to consumption (including drinking, cooking, brushing teeth or preparing food):

Boil water for one full minute in a clean container. The one-minute boil time begins after the water has been brought to a rolling boil. (The flat taste can be eliminated by shaking the water in a bottle or pouring it from one container to another.);

If the water is clear, mix 1/8 teaspoon of unscented, liquid chlorine laundry bleach with one gallon of water and let it stand for at least 30 minutes prior to consumption;

If the water is cloudy or colored, use 1/4 teaspoon per gallon of water. Be sure to mix thoroughly.
If treated water has too strong a chlorine taste, it can be made more palatable by allowing the water to stand exposed to the air for a few hours or by pouring it from one clean container to another several times.

Boiling is the most effective method of disinfecting water, particularly for people who are severely immunocompromised (infected with HIV/AIDS, cancer and transplant patients taking immunosuppressive drugs, or anyone born with a weakened immune system) and for infants and the elderly who wish to take extra precautions.

People obtaining water from a public water system (a system providing water to 15 homes and businesses or more) must continue to disinfect their drinking water by one of the above listed methods until a public notice is issued by DHH that the water has been tested and is safe to drink. It may take as long as three weeks before a water system is declared safe.

People who have been affected by loss of water service may expect some irregularities with their water while efforts are being made to ensure that the water is safe. It is expected that water may have an unusual chlorine odor as well as possible sediments appearing in the water while these special precautions being taken. Flushing household taps for a few minutes should fix this problem.
Contact: OPH Safe Drinking Water Program, 225-342-7499.

For the latest information on Hurricane Gustav, visit emergency.louisiana.gov or call the state's emergency hotline at 1-866-288-2484 to listen to a recorded message with the most up-to-date information.

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