

# Instructions for Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) *E. coli* MCL Violation Notice

## Description of Violation or Situation

Beginning April 1, 2016, an *E. coli* maximum contaminant level (MCL) violation requires Tier 1 public notification. This violation occurs when any public water system has:

- A total coliform-positive routine sample result followed by an *E. coli*-positive repeat sample result;
- An *E. coli*-positive routine sample result followed by a total coliform-positive repeat sample result;
- An *E. coli*-positive routine sample result and fails to take all required repeat samples; or
- A total coliform-positive repeat sample result and fails to test for *E. coli*.

You must provide public notice to persons served as soon as practical but no more than 24 hours after learning of the MCL violation [40 CFR 141.202(b)]. During this time, **you must also contact your state**. You should also coordinate with your local health department. You must use one or more of the following methods to deliver the notice to consumers [40 CFR 141.202(c)]:

- Radio
- Television
- Hand or direct delivery
- Posting in conspicuous locations
- Another method approved in writing by the state

You may need to use additional methods (e.g., newspaper or delivery of multiple copies to hospitals, clinics, or apartment buildings) since notice must be provided in a manner reasonably calculated to reach all persons served. If you post or hand deliver, EPA recommends printing your notice on your system's letterhead, if available.

The notice included is appropriate for hand delivery or for publication in a newspaper. However, you may wish to modify it before using it for a radio or television broadcast. If you do modify the notice, you must still include all required public notice elements from 40 CFR 141.205(a) and leave the mandatory language unchanged (see below).

## Mandatory Language

Mandatory language on health effects (from Appendix B to 40 CFR 141 Subpart Q) must be included as written and is presented in this notice in italics with an asterisk on each end. You will need to update the information presented in brackets with the appropriate information.

You must also include standard language to encourage the distribution of the public notice to all persons served, where applicable [40 CFR 141.205(d)]. This language is also presented in this notice in italics with an asterisk on each end.

## Alternative Sources of Water

If you are selling or providing bottled water, your notice should say where it can be obtained. Remember that bottled water can also be contaminated. If you are providing bottled water, make sure it meets U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and/or state bottled water safety standards.

## **Corrective Action**

In your notice, you must describe corrective actions you are taking [40 CFR 141.205(a)(7)] and when you expect to return to compliance or resolve the situation [40 CFR 141.205(a)(8)]. Listed below are some steps commonly taken by water systems with the presence of *E. coli*. Depending on the corrective action you are taking, you can use one or more of the following statements, if appropriate, or develop your own text:

- We are completing a comprehensive assessment of our water system and of our monitoring and operational practices to identify and correct any causes of the contamination.
- We are chlorinating and flushing the water system.
- We are switching to an alternate drinking water source.
- We are increasing sampling for coliform bacteria to determine the source of the contamination.
- We are repairing the wellhead seal.
- We are repairing, cleaning, and disinfecting the storage tank.
- We are restricting water intake from the river/lake/reservoir to prevent additional bacteria from entering the water system and restricting water use to emergencies.

## **After Issuing the Notice**

**Make sure to send a copy of each type of notice and a certification that you have met all the public notification requirements to your state within 10 days** after the original or any repeat notice(s) [40 CFR 141.31(d)].

It is recommended that you notify health professionals in the area of the violation. People may call their doctors with questions about how the violation may affect their health, and the doctors should have the information they need to respond appropriately. In addition, health professionals, including dentists, use tap water during their procedures and need to know about the potential contamination so they can use bottled water.

It is a good idea to inform your consumers when the violation has been resolved.

## **Your South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Contacts:**

Community and Non-transient non-community systems:

Krista McCuen, 803-898-3572, [mccuenkm@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:mccuenkm@dhec.sc.gov)

Transient non-community and non-public (state) systems:

Connie Zeigler, 803-898-0279, [zeiglecl@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:zeiglecl@dhec.sc.gov)

Mailing address: Drinking Water Compliance Monitoring  
Bacteriological Program  
2600 Bull Street  
Columbia, SC, 29201

Fax: 803.898.3795

Please contact SC DHEC if you need the notice in Spanish.

**EXAMPLE**  
**DRINKING WATER WARNING**

***E. coli* is present in [Water System Name]'s water**

**BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING**

[Briefly describe the situation, such as: “*E. coli* bacteria were found in the water supply on [give date]” or “We did not perform required testing of the water system and must assume that *E. coli* bacteria are in the water as of [give date]]. 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.

**What should I do? What does this mean?**

- **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST.** Bring all water to a boil, let it boil for one minute and let it cool before using, or use bottled water. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation until further notice. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.
  
- *\*E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Human pathogens in these wastes can cause short-term effects, such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a greater health risk for infants, young children, the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.\**
  
- The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice from their healthcare providers about drinking this water.

**What is being done?**

[Describe corrective action]. We will inform you when tests show no bacteria are present and you no longer need to boil your water. We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated timeframe].

For more information, please contact [name of contact] at [phone number] or [mailing address]. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by bacteria and other disease-causing organisms are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

*\*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.\**

This notice is being sent to you by [water system name]. State Water System ID#: SC\_\_\_\_\_.

Date distributed: \_\_\_\_\_.

## DRINKING WATER WARNING

*E. coli* is present in \_\_\_\_\_

### BOIL YOUR WATER BEFORE USING

Select the situation that applies (you must select one) and fill-in the dates:

Our water system had a total coliform-positive routine sample result on \_\_\_\_\_ followed by an *E. coli*-positive repeat sample result on \_\_\_\_\_.

Our water system had an *E. coli*-positive routine sample result on \_\_\_\_\_ followed by a total coliform-positive repeat sample result on \_\_\_\_\_.

Our water system had an *E. coli*-positive routine sample result on \_\_\_\_\_ and we failed to take all required repeat samples.

Our water system had a total coliform-positive repeat sample result on \_\_\_\_\_ and failed to test for *E. coli*.

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.

#### What should I do? What does this mean?

- **DO NOT DRINK THE WATER WITHOUT BOILING IT FIRST.** Bring all water to a boil, let it boil for one minute and let it cool before using, or use bottled water. Boiled or bottled water should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation until further notice. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water.

- *\*E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Human pathogens in these wastes can cause short-term effects, such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a greater health risk for infants, young children, the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.\**

- The symptoms above are not caused only by organisms in drinking water. If you experience any of these symptoms and they persist, you may want to seek medical advice. People at increased risk should seek advice from their healthcare providers about drinking this water.

#### What is being done?

Describe corrective action: \_\_\_\_\_

We anticipate resolving the problem within \_\_\_\_\_.

For more information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
or \_\_\_\_\_. General guidelines on ways to  
lessen the risk of infection by bacteria and other disease-causing organisms are available from the EPA Safe  
Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

*\*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.\**

This notice is being sent to you by \_\_\_\_\_.

State Water System ID#: SC \_\_\_\_\_ . Date distributed: \_\_\_\_\_.