



Frequently Asked Questions about Tillsonburg's Boil Water Advisory

Why do we have a boil water advisory in Tillsonburg?

During routine water quality testing this week a sample collected from the Tillsonburg Community Centre was found to contain bacteria. The sample contained 1 total coliform and 1 *E. Coli* per 100 mL.

Oxford County staff immediately reported these results to Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) and the provincial spill action centre. Based on the findings, SWPH issued a boil water advisory as a precautionary measure on October 9, 2024.

How long will the boil water advisory be in effect?

It takes 24 hours for a lab to process bacteria samples for drinking water. This delay is necessary to allow the sample to incubate.

When the lab confirmed bacteria in the water, SWPH issued a boil water advisory. This advisory will remain in effect until two sets of water samples (taken 24 hours apart) indicate there is no further risk to the public.

How did you let people know about the boil water advisory?

Communications staff at the Town of Tillsonburg worked with Oxford County and Southwestern Public Health to notify citizens about the boil water advisory as soon as it was announced. Information was shared with the public using a variety of traditional and digital channels.

- Signage was immediately installed at the Tillsonburg Community Centre
- 300 notices were distributed and posted to high traffic locations in the affected area
- Media releases were posted to the Town, County and SWPH websites and distributed to local media
- Incident messaging was added to the Town's phone system
- Pop up notifications and information banners were placed on the Town website
- Notifications were posted to Facebook and X
- A push notification was sent to approximately 4500 users of the Town of Tillsonburg app
- Phone calls/emails were directed to the Business Improvement Area, Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders

What have water services staff done to correct the issue?

The chlorination system has been tested and found to be working properly with adequate chlorine levels in the system. Crews have flushed 62 hydrants in the affected area to confirm the water quality in the area.



How often is the drinking water tested for bacteria?

Water samples are collected and tested every week from all wells and treatment plants, as well as at various locations across Tillsonburg. Oxford County also has continuous monitoring in place at each treatment facility to ensure the drinking water is properly disinfected.

Of the 11 drinking water samples collected in Tillsonburg this week, only one was found to contain bacteria.

Who is responsible for water distribution in Tillsonburg?

Oxford County is responsible for Tillsonburg's water system. Routine maintenance (e.g., flushing) is done by the Town of Tillsonburg's Operations department.

Is all of Tillsonburg affected by the advisory?

Only people in the affected area ([see map](#)) need to boil their water. Water samples from other locations in Tillsonburg were also tested during the routine weekly sampling and did not show any bacteria. This testing included sites upstream and downstream of the affected area.

Is the boil water advisory a result of population growth in Tillsonburg or construction at the Tillsonburg Community Centre?

The cause of the bacteria has not yet been identified. However, any number of situations could cause a water sample to test positive, including inadvertent contamination during the collection process or laboratory processing. Stagnant water in the pipes at a collection site could also result in poor water quality.

The Town of Tillsonburg has not had any recent watermain breaks and the chlorination system is functioning as expected, with adequate levels of chlorine in the water.

You can learn more about Tillsonburg's current water system in the [2023 Annual Drinking Water System Summary Report](#) posted on the County's website.

[The 2024 Water and Wastewater Master Plan](#) sets out Oxford County's long-term approach to managing current and future water/wastewater needs.