

# UPDATE: BOIL WATER NOTICE

## OLALLA WATER SYSTEM

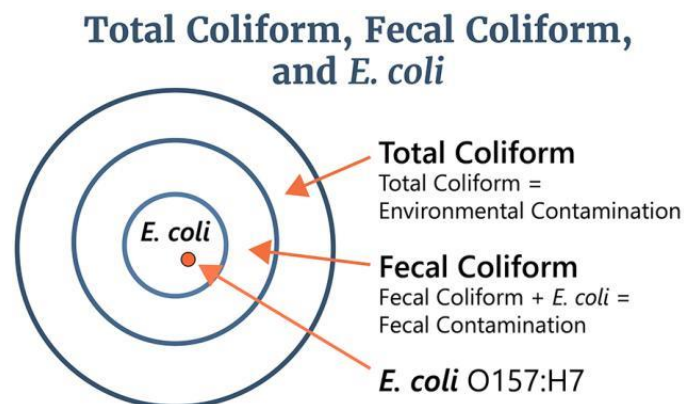
April 28, 2025

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is reminding all Olalla Water System users the **Boil Water Notice issued on Friday, April 25, 2025**, remains in effect. Water system users are encouraged to use a safe alternative source of water or boil water for all drinking, brushing teeth, food preparation/cooking purposes, and ice making. Water should be brought to a full boil for at least one (1) minute.

Total bacteria and background bacteria have been periodically reported in water system samples since August 2024. The RDOS has been in continuous consultation with Interior Health (IHA) regarding the results and is working diligently to find the source of the contamination. Responses to the bacteriological results so far include enhanced bacteriological sampling, extensive flushing of the distribution system, temporary chlorination (October 11, 2024, to February 18, 2025) and a Water Quality Advisory (March 13 to March 24, 2025).

The most recent Boil Water Notice is the result of an increase in the frequency and quantity of the total coliforms and background bacteria being reported. The RDOS is requesting the cooperation of water system users in following the boil water notice so staff can continue investigating the source of the contamination.

### What are Total Coliforms?



- **Total coliform bacteria** are commonly found in the environment (e.g., soil or vegetation) and are generally harmless. If only total coliform bacteria are detected in drinking water, the source is probably environmental. Fecal contamination is not likely. However, if environmental contamination can enter the system, there may also be a way for pathogens to enter the system. Therefore, it is important to find the source and resolve the problem.

- **Fecal coliform bacteria** are a sub-group of total coliform bacteria. They appear in great quantities in the intestines and feces of people and animals. The presence of fecal coliform in a drinking water sample often indicates recent fecal contamination, meaning that there is a greater risk that pathogens are present than if only total coliform bacteria is detected.
- ***E. coli*** is a sub-group of the fecal coliform group. Most *E. coli* bacteria are harmless and are found in great quantities in the intestines of people and warm-blooded animals. Some strains, however, can cause illness. The presence of *E. coli* in a drinking water sample almost always indicates recent fecal contamination, meaning there is a greater risk that pathogens are present.
- **A note about *E. coli*:** *E. coli* outbreaks receive a lot of media coverage. Most outbreaks have been caused by a specific strain of *E. coli* bacteria known as ***E. coli* O157:H7**. When a drinking water sample is reported as "*E. coli* present," it does not mean that this dangerous strain is present and in fact, it is probably not present. However, it does indicate recent fecal contamination. Boiling or treating contaminated drinking water with a disinfectant, such as chlorine, destroys all forms of *E. coli*, including O157:H7

### What is the source of the contamination in the Olalla Water System?

- The source remains unknown at this time. The bacteriological results from the Olalla Well to date indicate the well is not the source of the contamination. The RDOS is conducting further analysis to see if there are any other parameters that may indicate a change in the source water quality.
- A cross-connection in the distribution system is a potential source of the bacteriological contamination. On Friday, April 25, 2025, the RDOS requested all water system users assess their plumbing systems for any cross-connections.

A cross-connection is any actual or potential connection between the drinking water (potable) system and a non-potable substance (contaminant). Backflow is when the flow of water in a pipe reverses from the normal direction. When a cross-connection and backflow occur simultaneously, often the result is a contaminant entering the drinking water system.

- Some common sources of cross connections are as follows:
  - Boilers (heating systems)
  - Private wells
  - Irrigation systems

### What is the RDOS doing to address the problem?

- Additional bacteriological monitoring was implemented in the fall of 2024. This was followed by the installation of two additional dedicated sampling stations in early 2025. The goal of this additional monitoring is to assist in identifying the source of the contamination, however, to-date the results have not provided a definitive origin of the contamination.
- Water operators have thoroughly examined and assessed all components of the water system that could provide a conduit for contamination with none being found.

### What are the next steps?

- The RDOS is continuing to closely monitor the bacteriological quality in the system.
- By adhering to the **Boil Water Notice** and providing any feedback to the RDOS on any irregularities observed in the water system, the RDOS can continue to investigate the source of the contamination without having to add chlorine to the system.

For further information, please contact RDOS Public Works at 250-490-4106 or 250-490-4135 during regular business hours, Monday through Friday.

For after-hours water emergencies, please call RDOS Regional Dispatch at 250-490-4141.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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April 28, 2025  
RDOS Public Works