Fort McMurray Boil Water Advisory: 
Background Information

A boil water advisory was issued for Fort McMurray on May 4th/revised May 18th, 2016 in response to the wildfire. This advisory will be lifted in stages, pending the outcome of flushing and testing activities. This document provides additional background on the advisory and related activity.

Why was the boil water advisory issued?
The boil water advisory has been issued because:
- the impact of the wildfire to the drinking water system, including the water treatment plant, was unclear.
- the water may have been contaminated during the fire.

Untreated, raw water did not enter the distribution system at any time during the emergency.

What work is being done to make the water safe to drink?
The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) has been working on completing the following steps, which will ensure drinking water in your home is safe to drink ("potable").

Step 1: Confirm drinking water treatment plant is making potable water and meeting water treatment guidelines. This includes conducting:
- water testing to ensure no harmful microbes or chemicals
- inspections to ensure equipment is operating properly

Step 2: Flush water that may have been contaminated (non-potable) out of pipes. Drain and clean reservoirs.

Step 3: Fill pipes with potable water from the water treatment plant.

Step 4: Test water in the distribution system to ensure there are no harmful microbes or chemicals in the water supply.

Step 5: Ask residents flush water from their pipes that may have been contaminated.
A diagram showing the steps for ensuring clean drinking water in Fort McMurray is available at: [http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-water-treatment-plant-clean-up-diagram.pdf](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-water-treatment-plant-clean-up-diagram.pdf).

**Why are residents asked to flush their plumbing before the boil water advisory is lifted?**

Water has been sitting in the plumbing in homes for several weeks. This standing water can allow harmful germs to grow. Flushing water from the cold and hot water taps for five minutes before using this water ensures the standing water has been removed.

**Why will the current boil water advisory be lifted in stages?**

The RMWB water distribution system is large and organized into neighbourhoods. Water treatment system operators are working throughout the City to flush and test the distribution system and reservoirs.

As neighbourhoods and reservoirs are completely flushed and water testing confirms the water is safe, the boil water advisory will be lifted in that area.

It is anticipated that the boil water advisory will be lifted in this order:

1) the Lower Town Site,
2) the neighbourhoods of Thickwood/ Timberlea/ Parsons Creek,
3) areas to the south, east and west of Downtown. This may be completed in several stages.

Boil water advisories in areas most impacted by the fire may remain in effect for a longer time.

Visit [www.ahs.ca/wildfire](http://www.ahs.ca/wildfire) to find the most current boil water advisories and related information.

If you are uncertain whether and how the boil water advisory impacts your area, please visit [www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-map-boil-water-advisory-areas-lift.pdf](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-map-boil-water-advisory-areas-lift.pdf) to view current map(s) showing the advisories in effect.