When an emergency or disaster strikes, water safety is often a concern for child nutrition staff. Every foodservice operation relies on potable water.

**Potable water** is clean and safe to use for drinking, cooking, washing hands and equipment, and other everyday needs.

### How Water Becomes Unsafe During a Disaster

**Natural Disasters:** Floods or windstorms may create unsafe water conditions from sewage, chemicals, or other contaminants getting into potable water sources.

**Emergency Impacts:** Fire or wind damage could close a building for months. Stagnant water in pipes may become unsafe. Mold and bacteria could grow, or pipes could leach minerals.

### Water Safety Actions

- **Create a plan for safe water supplies before disaster strikes, including a potable water source.**
- **Make a temporary handwashing station with a copy of the handwashing procedure for staff.**
- **Partner with others, such as the maintenance department or local water utility, for resources and guidance.**
- **Flush the system when appropriate. Replace the water in both the hot and cold water pipes to remove the risk of microorganisms and minerals. Work with partners to flush the system properly.**
- **Contact the local water utility or health authority staff to test the water supply.**
- **Document the actions taken and the results of your water safety plan.**
- **Train staff on emergency procedures before a disaster.**

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