



Floodwatch Tips

Information for private drinking water supplies: What to do after a flood

When a drinking water supply has been affected by flood waters, the well water is likely to have been contaminated with waterborne pathogens (germs) that can cause illness. The following information summarizes the actions an owner of a private water supply should take to ensure their water is safe following a flooding event.

➤ **Step 1 - Assess the risk - is your water safe?**

Your well should be considered contaminated if it was immersed in flood water, or is shallow and near an area that was flooded. Water used for drinking and food preparation must first be disinfected, or an alternate water source used (i.e. bottled water).

If your water is from a lake or stream or you believe that your well may have been contaminated by gasoline, oil or other chemicals, the water should only be used for flushing toilets. Disinfecting the water will not remove chemical contaminants.

"Just because your water looks clear does not mean it is safe to drink!"

➤ **Step 2 - Recognize the hazards**

There is a potential danger of electrical shock and damage to your pump and other components if they have been exposed to flood water.

Do not turn the pump or other electrical equipment on until the flood waters have receded and the electrical system has dried. A registered qualified pump installer should assess and repair any damage. A list of registered pump installers can be found at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/groundwater-wells/information-for-property-owners/installing-a-well-pump>.

➤ **Step 3 - Disinfect your drinking water**

All contaminated drinking water should be disinfected prior to use for the following purposes:

- Drinking
- Preparing infant formula and juices
- Cooking or making ice
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Brushing teeth
- Washing dishes

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Disinfection methods

- **Boiling** - Boil water at least 1 minute (rolling boil). Preferably use a kettle so as to reduce the risk of burns. Boiling will **not** remove the color/cloudiness from the water. Boiling will only kill the harmful microorganisms.
- **Liquid Chlorine Bleach** - Add 4 drops of household bleach per 1 litre of cold water, shake and allow to stand for 30 minutes before using.
- **Iodine or Chlorine Tablets** - Add chlorine or iodine tablets according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Note: Most household water filters will **not** remove microbial contamination.

➤ Step 4 - Disinfect your well

Prior to resuming normal use of your well, flushing and disinfection of the well must be completed to aid in removing contaminants and other debris that may have entered the well during the flood. For a step-by-step description of how to disinfect your well, please refer to the Fraser Health document "*Disinfection of a Well After Flooding*".

➤ Step 5 - Test your water

After the well has been properly disinfected and the chlorine has been thoroughly flushed out of the system, the water should be tested for the presence of total coliform and E.coli bacteria to confirm that bacteriological contamination has been removed.

For a complete list of labs refer to the attached document "*Laboratories Approved By B.C. Provincial Health Office*".

***"Until testing can show that your water is safe to drink,
you should continue to disinfect your water
or use an alternate source for
drinking and food preparation purposes."***

References: *Flood Recovery-Restoring Well Water* (2006). New York State DOH
What to do After a Flood (2005). U.S. EPA. Department of Water

To contact an Environmental Health Officer, please call
Population Public Health Central Call Centre at:
604-587-3936
and request to be connected to the Drinking Water Program.

Fraser Health: www.fraserhealth.ca/healthprotection