



USING WELLS AFTER FLOODS

WARNING!

Do not turn on the pump

There is a danger of electrical shock and damage to your well or pump if they were flooded.

Do not drink or use well water from a flooded private well

Do not use well water from a flooded private well for drinking, cooking, washing, or bathing. Contaminated well water can make people sick.

CAUTION!

Because of the extensive flood area and the speed and direction of groundwater flow, your well may not be a safe source of drinking water for many months after the flood. The well can become contaminated with bacteria or other contaminants. Wastewater from malfunctioning septic tanks or chemicals seeping into the ground can contaminate the groundwater even after the water was tested and deemed to be safe. It will be necessary to take long-range precautions, including repeated testing, to protect the safety of drinking water.

Sampling and Testing the Well Water

For information on well sampling and water test kits, contact the Division of Public Health's Office of Drinking Water: 302-741-8630.

Well and Pump Inspection

Well or pump contractors should disinfect drilled, driven, or bored wells, because it is difficult for private owners to thoroughly disinfect those wells. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact the Office of Drinking Water or agricultural extension agent for disinfection advice. Follow instructions from State and local health authorities.

- **Flood Conditions at the Well** – Swiftly moving floodwater carries large debris that loosens well hardware, dislodges well construction materials, or distorts casing. Coarse sediment in the floodwaters can erode pump components. If wells are not tightly capped, sediment and floodwater can enter and contaminate them. Wells more than 10 years old or less than 50 feet deep are likely to be contaminated, even if there is no apparent damage. Floods may cause some wells to collapse.
- **Electrical System** – Remember that there is a danger of electrical shock from any electrical device that was flooded. Consult a certified electrician.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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Page 1 of 2



After floodwaters recede and the pump and electrical system has dried, do not turn on the equipment until a qualified electrician, well contractor, or pump contractor checks the wiring system. All electrical components must be dry before electrical service can be restored. Get assistance from a well or pump contractor to turn the pump on.

- **Pump Operation** – All pumps and their electrical components can be damaged by sediment and floodwater. The pump, including the valves and gears, needs to be cleaned of silt and sand. If pumps are not cleaned and properly lubricated, they can burn out. Ask a well or pump contractor to clean, repair, or maintain different types of pumps.

Resources

“Environmental Protection Agency’s Fact Sheets for “Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water and What to Do After the Flood,” August 2006.