



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR PRIVATE WATER WELL HAS FLOODED

After flooding, private well owners are reminded that they should continue to boil their water or use an alternative water source until their water is confirmed to be safe for use. To boil your water, bring it to a rolling (bubbling) boil for at least two minutes prior to using it for drinking, making baby formula or juices, brushing teeth, washing raw foods, cooking, or making ice. It is important to make sure the septic system is functional before using water fixtures in the home.

After flood waters recede, all residents with private water wells are advised to:

1. Assess your well to check for flood waters and damage.

- There should be no flood water immediately surrounding the well. The ground around the well may have eroded during flooding, possibly creating unsafe conditions or a pathway for surface water and contaminants to enter the well. In other cases, the electrical wires attached to the pump in a well may be damaged risking electrocution. Therefore, well owners should exercise extreme caution approaching their wells, especially older, large diameter dug wells after a flood.
- Call a licensed water-well contractor to check your well system. The pump (including valves and gears) might need to be cleaned to remove any soil or sand.
- **Don't** turn on the pump until a qualified electrician or a licensed water-well contractor checks the wiring system. You could damage the well and pump or even get electrocuted (harmed by electric shock).
- After the well has been inspected, flush the well of any flood water until the water runs clear. Use an outside spigot and a hose to direct the water to a nearby drainage-way rather than into your septic system (after flooding, septic systems may be overwhelmed and do not need more water).

2. Disinfect your well.

- After flooding, your well and the whole plumbing system connected to it need to be shock chlorinated. This is a way to kill harmful bacteria.
- Disinfect the well and internal plumbing using the ***Guidelines for Disinfecting Your Drinking Water Well***.
- Clear the bleach from the well by running water through an outside hose away from grass, trees, septic field areas until the strong smell of bleach disappears. Ensure water does not enter any watercourse such as a lake, river, stream. To clear bleach from household plumbing, open all indoor taps until the water no longer smells of chlorine.
- Change any water treatment filters and check any water system treatment devices to ensure they are working properly.



3. Take a sample of your well water.

- After disinfecting your well, wait two days. Take a sample of your drinking water from a kitchen tap. If the result indicates your water is satisfactory, you will still need to take two additional water samples to confirm the potability of your well water. The safest option is to continue using an alternative water source or boiling your water until you take a second sample and get a second satisfactory water sample result.
- The second sample should be taken approximately 1 week after the first sample. The water can now be considered safe to drink but a third sample should be taken to ensure the well water remains safe.
- A third sample should be taken 2 to 4 weeks after the first sample.
- If all three samples are safe, continue to sample your water supply 3 to 4 times per year.

4. Additional well water testing may be required.

- Well disinfection will not provide protection from pesticides, heavy metals, oil, gasoline and other types of non-biological contamination. If such contamination is suspected, due to the nearness of these contaminant sources, you may need additional chemical testing. See *Getting Your Drinking Water Tested - Good Advice for Private Well Owners*.

For more information:

Contact Environmental Health Services at (867) 667-8391, toll free at 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8391, environmental.health@yukon.ca or visit #2 Hospital Road, Whitehorse to speak with a health officer.