

WCDPHE Disinfection of Household Wells

Before Disinfection: Check the condition of your well. Make sure there is no exposed or damaged wiring. If you notice any damage, call a professional before the disinfection process.

Materials Needed:

- One gallon of non-scented household liquid bleach;
- rubber gloves;
- eye protection;
- old clothes; and
- a funnel.



Step 1

If your water is muddy or cloudy, run the water from an outside spigot with a hose attached until the water becomes clear and free of sediments.

Step 2



Determine what type of well you have and how to pour the bleach into the well. Some wells have a sanitary seal with either an air vent or a plug that can be removed (a). If it is a bored or dug well, the entire cover can be lifted off to provide a space for pouring the bleach into the well (b).



Step 3

Take the gallon of bleach and funnel (if needed) and carefully pour the bleach down into the well casing.



Step 4

After the bleach has been added, run water from an outside hose into the well casing until you smell chlorine coming from the hose. Then turn off the outside hose.

Step 5

Turn on all cold water faucets, inside and outside of house, until the chlorine odor is detected in each faucet, then shut them all off. If you have a water treatment system, switch it to bypass before turning on the indoor faucets.



Step 6

Wait 6 to 24 hours before turning the faucets back on. It is important not to drink, cook, bathe or wash with this water during the time period --- it contains high amounts of chlorine.

Step 7

Once the waiting period is up, turn on an outside spigot with hose attached and run the water into a safe area where it will not disturb plants, lakes, streams or septic tanks. Run the water until there is no longer a chlorine odor. Turn the water off.



Step 8

The system should now be disinfected, and you can now use the water.

Step 9

Have your water tested for bacteria 7 to 10 days after disinfection.

Sampling and Testing the Well Water

Contact the local health department to have well water sampled and tested for contamination. Or, call your state laboratory certification officer to find a certified lab near you. You can get this number from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

If the health department issues sterile bottles for the private well owner to collect water samples, follow all instructions for the use of these bottles.

After the pump is back in operation, the health department should sample and test the water at regular intervals.

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

CONCERNS AND ADVISORIES

If in doubt about the well water supply, follow health department drinking and bathing advisories.



Remember that there is a danger of electrical shock from any electrical device that has been flooded; consult a certified electrician. Rubber boots and gloves are not adequate protection from electric shock.

Well disinfection will not provide protection from pesticides, heavy metals and other types of non-biological contamination. If such contamination is suspected, due to the nearness of these contaminant sources, special treatment is required.

Information on home water treatment units (also called point-of-use and point-of-entry units) is available from U.S. EPA by phoning the **Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791)**.

If you observe chemical containers (including barrels and drums) that have moved to your property, call your state or county health department or the **Superfund Hotline (1-800-424-9346)**.

For information on long-term water quality conditions in the area, consult the state or county health department.

Well owners may have information about the construction, or testing of their well and this information will be helpful to the health department in determining water quality conditions.

Septic systems should not be used immediately after floods. Drain fields will not work until underground water has receded. Septic lines may have broken during the flood.