

wellcare® information for you about Managing a Flooded Well

If you live in an area that was recently flooded, your private well may be in danger of contamination from pollutants carried by flood water or at risk of shock from water-logged well equipment.

First Steps

Below is a quick overview of advisories that should be followed after a flood:

- Do not drink or wash with your well water. You could get sick from contaminants washed into the well by the flood.
- Do not turn on the well pump. There is a danger of electrical shock and damage to your well or pump if they were flooded.
- Contact your well professional for help in dealing with the impacts of the flood on your water quality and well system.

Tests for Contamination

You should suspect water contamination any time your well casing becomes flooded; if your well is shallow and you are near areas that have been flooded; or if you notice taste, color or sediment changes in your water.

Flood conditions can allow bacterial, viral, parasite or chemical contamination to enter the top of your well or seep down along your well's casing. Even if flood water did not rise over the top of your well casing, your neighbor's well may have been flooded, allowing contamination to migrate underground to your well.

If you suspect your drinking water is contaminated, find an alternative source for drinking, cooking and washing. You can get water from a neighbor's well you know is safe or from a community water supply, or you can purchase bottled water. If you can't find a convenient source of safe water, boil your well water before use. Boil the water vigorously for one minute. If you live in an altitude greater than one mile above sea level, increase boiling time to three minutes. For more information on boiling your water, see our wellcare® information sheet *What You Need to Know if You Are Told to Boil Your Drinking Water*.

Before you resume using your well, collect a water sample and have it tested for bacteria by a state certified laboratory. Contact your local or state health department for a list of state certified laboratories in your area or contact the wellcare® Hotline for assistance.

If the sample tests positive for coliform bacteria, ask the laboratory to test for E. coli bacteria. The presence of E. coli usually indicates disease-causing bacteria are in your water and it is not safe to drink, cook with, or wash with.

Disinfecting the Well

If tests indicate your well is contaminated with E. coli bacteria, you should have the well and the entire plumbing system disinfected using a shock chlorination process. A licensed well professional has the equipment, materials and expertise to eliminate bacteria contamination.

You may do this work yourself if you carefully follow the directions on our wellcare® information sheet *Disinfecting Your Well*. Always have your water tested a second time after it is treated with chlorine or any other treatment process.

Check the Well and Pump

Flood water can carry large debris that can loosen well hardware, dislodge well construction materials or distort the well casing, particularly on older wells. Coarse sediment and flood water can erode pump and electrical components.

After the flood has receded and the pump and electrical system are dry, ask your well professional to check the well system. The pump, including the valves and gears, may need to be cleaned of silt and sand.

Do not turn on the equipment until the wiring system has been checked by your well professional or a qualified electrician. If the pump's control box was flooded, all electrical fittings must be dry before service can be restored. There is a risk of shock and damage to your well and pump if the system is not dry and clean.

Protecting Your Well from Flood

After a flood, ask your well professional if your well casing pipe should be raised to a height of at least two feet above the regional flood elevation for your location. This is usually the height of the water during a 100-year flood event. You should also contact your local or state regulatory agency to see if your well system is up to current code for your area.

For more information on managing a flooded well, see our wellcare® information sheet on Emergencies & Disasters and Your Well or contact the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033.

For more information to help you maintain your well and protect your water supply



wellcare® is a program of the **Water Systems Council** (WSC). WSC is the only national organization solely focused on protecting the health and water supply of the 43 million people nationwide who depend on household wells for their water supply.

This publication is one in a series of wellcare® information sheets. There are more than 90 available FREE on the WSC website at www.watersystemscouncil.org.

Well owners and others with questions about wells or groundwater can also contact the FREE wellcare® Hotline at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org

JOIN THE WELLCARE® WELL OWNERS NETWORK! You can join the well owners network and receive regular information on how to maintain your well and protect your well water...it's FREE!

Contact us at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org or www.watersystemscouncil.org.