



MDH urges property owners to test any private drinking water wells affected by recent floods

After heavy rains and flooding impacted communities in parts of the state, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is urging Minnesotans to test their private drinking water wells if the wells may have been impacted by flood waters.

According to MDH Environmental Health Program Manager Chris Elvrum, potential contaminants may exist in flood water. That is why any wells known to have come into contact with flood water should be cleaned out and tested before going back into use.

“Flood water can carry bacteria and other contaminants that may affect the quality of wells if the flood water reaches them,” Elvrum said. “We recommend that if flood water came within 50 feet of a well used to supply drinking water, that the well should be tested before anyone uses it again. If flood water reached a well, that well should not be used for drinking, cooking or brushing teeth until it is cleaned out, disinfected and tested.”

Additional recommendations for well owners in flood-impacted areas include:

- If your well was not protected prior to the flooding, have a professional well driller clean out any sediment and debris. Using your well pump to flush out the well could ruin the pump.
- Disinfect the well yourself or have a contractor do it. Instructions are available online at [Disinfecting Flooded Private Water Wells](#).
- After disinfecting the well and pumping out the chlorine solution, contact a MDH-certified testing laboratory about submitting a water sample. Tell the lab staff you need to have your well tested for coliform bacteria. They will tell you what you need to do, and provide a bottle for the sample.
- Be prepared to repeat the disinfection and testing process several times, if necessary, to ensure that your well is free of bacterial contamination.
- Don't drink water from your well until you have laboratory confirmation that it is safe and free of bacterial contamination.

For more information about well safety and protecting your health during a flood, visit [Floods: Protecting Your Health](#).