

Private well flooding

If you suspect that your well has been affected by flood waters, the Oregon Public Health Division, Office of Environmental Public Health (OEPH) recommends that you boil your water, or obtain water known to be safe from another source until you are sure your well is safe. Cloudy or muddy water, flooded well houses or submerged well casing seals are signs that your well might have been contaminated by flood water. Water should be boiled for one minute after it comes to a rolling boil. However, boiling water will not address all contamination. For example, boiling may actually concentrate nitrate levels. The best way to determine if the well has been contaminated is to have it tested for coliform bacteria, nitrate, and any other pollutants of concern by an accredited drinking water laboratory. Please contact OEPH for guidance on selecting a lab and pollutants for testing.

Household uses of water

- If there is doubt about the safety of your water, use the following table to determine

Activities that <u>do</u> require boiled water:	Activities that <u>do not</u> require boiled water:
Drinking	Showering
Washing food served without cooking/baking	Tub Bathing
Adding water to food without cooking/baking	Dish washing or rinsing*
Ice Making	Laundrying
Cleaning food contact surfaces	General cleaning, mopping
Gargling	Hand washing
Eye washing	Pet watering
Taking water with medications	Pet bathing
Tooth brushing	Plant water/irrigation

*Cleaned dishes and utensils should be rinsed in water that contains 1 tablespoon of household bleach per gallon of water (100-200 ppm chlorine) and allowed to air dry before use.

Home treatment devices that do not boil or chemically disinfect the water with acceptable disinfectants are not considered reliable alternatives to boiling the water.

Disinfecting well water

- If you don't have clean, safe, bottled water and if boiling is not possible, you often can make water safer to drink as a last resort by using a disinfectant, such as unscented household chlorine bleach, iodine, or chlorine dioxide tablets. These can kill most harmful organisms, though not all. EPA provides guidance for disinfection of small quantities of drinking water at the following website: <http://water.epa.gov/drink/emergprep/emergencydisinfection.cfm>.
- Chemical disinfection is not able to remove all types of contamination.

Private well disinfection

- If the well has an electrical pump, turn off all electricity and clear debris from the well. If electrical connections appear wet or damaged, get assistance from a well or pump contractor to avoid the risk of shock.
- After the floodwater has subsided from the well vicinity, pump the well until the water runs clear. Use the outside faucet nearest the well to drain water from the well. If no pump is installed, bail water with a bucket until water is clear.
- Disinfect the well and then test it to be sure it is free of bacterial contamination and any other pollutants of concern. Steps for disinfecting your well can be found at:

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/Operations/Documents/welldisinfection.pdf>.

Additional Resources

Private well fact sheet (PDF)

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/SourceWater/Documents/gw/PrivateWellFactSheet.pdf>

External Partner resources

CDC: Well Testing

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/private/wells/testing.html>

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality - Disaster Cleanup:

[www.oregon.gov/DEQ/
stormdebrismgt.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/stormdebrismgt.shtml)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention – Disinfecting Wells After a Disaster:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/wellsdisinfect.asp>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – What To Do After The Flood:

<http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/well/whatdo.cfm>