

# PRIVATE WELL TESTING AFTER FLOODING

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## **When in doubt, do not drink or use the water if the water is cloudy, colored or smells bad.**

Consider alternatives such as: any community water supply, if available; or bottled water. If an alternative is not available, boil water for one minute at a rolling boil before use.

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## **If your well was covered by surface water during flooding...**

Your well and the entire plumbing system should be disinfected. This procedure is best done by a licensed [well driller or pump installer](#) with the expertise and equipment.

Well owners may disinfect their well and plumbing system themselves by carefully following procedures outlined in the [Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Disinfection Procedure](#).

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## **After disinfecting your well and BEFORE using your well again...**

Have the water tested for total coliform bacteria by a [certified laboratory](#). The State Laboratory of Hygiene also tests water and can be reached at **1-800-442-4618**. The state lab must receive the samples within two days of collection.

The laboratory you work through will provide you with a water sampling kit. It's very important to make sure you follow their sampling directions. Be sure to collect untreated water from your well system. Test results should be returned to you within 10 business days.

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## **If you have a positive sample...**

First, re-sample your well. If the second sample result confirms that the well is "at risk" or "unsafe", do not consume the water unless you boil it, at a rolling boil, for at least 1 minute. Replace any old, poorly-sealed well caps with a properly-fitting vermin-proof cap. If there is no such obvious source of contamination, contact your local well driller, pump installer or the nearest DNR office for assistance.

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## **If you have a negative sample...**

If the test results come back negative for bacteria, consider the water safe to drink but re-test in another month and be on the lookout for changes in the water's taste, odor and color.

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## **To prevent future contamination...**

Prevent well contamination during future flooding by having your well casing pipe raised to at least 2 feet above the regional flood elevation for your location.

Remember to test your well water at least **once a year** for bacterial contamination, and periodically for other contaminants, based on the land uses in your area.