

Emergency Response



Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org
Your Health Connection

Drinking Water Safety and Floods

Flood waters are often contaminated with bacteria and chemicals. When conditions indicate the water may not be safe for drinking, we issue drinking water advisories (DWA) to prevent any risk of water-borne illness. It is important to know how to protect yourself and your family from illnesses associated with the flood waters. This includes knowing the proper water safety precautions to take if floods occur.

During a flood, there is an increased risk that private drinking water wells may become contaminated with bacteria and/or any other contaminants that may be present in the flood water. Any well water system, whether deep or shallow, can become contaminated when flooding occurs. If flood waters have reached the level of your well head or covered your well head, your well water may be contaminated and not safe to drink.

During a flood - private water supply information

Residents who own private wells affected by flooding are advised to:

- Stop using your well water and use an alternative water supply such as commercially bottled water for ALL water use, including drinking, brushing teeth, preparing food including baby food and infant formula, cleaning, bathing, and hand washing.
- If you want to continue to use your well water and do not suspect chemical contamination, bring the water to a rolling boil for at least one minute and let it cool before using it for drinking, making infant formula, juices, ice, recipes, brushing your teeth, rinsing contact lenses, and washing food or dishes. Refrigerate your boiled water until it is used.
- Do not test your well water during a flood.

Additional information on alternate water supplies is available on our drinking water advisories webpage.

After a flood - private water supply information

Those on private wells or surface water impacted by the flood are reminded that they should continue to use an alternative water source until they confirm their water is safe for use.

After flood waters recede, all residents with private water supplies should:

- Assess their wells/surface water intake to check for flood waters and damage. There should be no flood water immediately surrounding the well. The ground around the well may have eroded during flooding, possibly creating unsafe conditions or a pathway for surface water and contaminants to enter the well. In other cases, the electrical wires attached to the pump in a well may be damaged risking electrocution. Therefore, well owners should exercise extreme caution approaching their wells, especially older, large diameter dug wells after a flood.
- Flush the well of any flood water.

See over...

- Disinfect the well and internal plumbing using the following disinfection instructions:
 - Change any treatment filters.
 - Check any water system treatment devices to ensure they are working properly.
- Take a sample of your well water. If the result indicates your water is "safe to drink", you will still need to take two additional water samples to confirm the potability of your well water.
 - The second sample should be taken approximately 1 week after the first sample.
 - The third sample should be taken 2 to 4 weeks after the first sample.
 - If all three samples are safe, continue to sample your water supply 3 to 4 times per year.

A complete listing of water sample bottle pick up and drop off locations is available on our [website](#).

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration, What Consumers Need to Know About Food and Water Safety During Hurricanes, Power Outages, and Floods, June 2018.