


Well Water & Flood Events

About 15% of the US population gets their water from a private drinking water well. According to a US Geological Survey, 1 in 5 of the sampled wells contained contaminants that exceeded drinking water standards.

The Midwest has experienced extreme flooding events in recent years, impacting thousands of people and costing billions of dollars. Extreme flooding events like this can contaminate private well water, making it unsafe to drink. Use this checklist to protect yourself and your family through a flood event, and ensure your water supply is safe and protected.

BEFORE A FLOOD

- ✔ Maintain a supply of drinking water in case the well water becomes contaminated.
- ✔ Turn off power to your well pump and unplug any equipment to reduce the risk of shock. Shut off the main plumbing shut-off valve inside the house
- ✔ Slope the area around your well to ensure runoff does not enter into the well and contaminate water.
- ✔ Ensure the well cap is above grade and is properly secured and sealed to prevent contamination from entering the well. If time allows, place sandbags around the well and wrap the well with durable sheet plastic and duct tape
- ✔ Regularly pump your septic tank and ensure the septic system is in good working order to prevent additional contamination from entering the well.
- ✔ Do not store chemicals near the well and do not dispose of any chemicals in the septic system.

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DURING A FLOOD

- ✓ Follow emergency and evacuation orders for your area.
- ✓ Assume your water is contaminated, and do not drink any water until it has been tested by a certified lab.
- ✓ Flood water is likely contaminated, so avoid contact with the water.



AFTER A FLOOD

- ✓ Inspect the area around the well and contact a licensed professional if damaged.



For a list of licensed well contractors in Nebraska, scan the QR code or visit go.unmc.edu/nebraska-well-contractors.



For a list of licensed well contractors in Iowa, scan the QR code or visit go.unmc.edu/iowa-well-contractors.

- ✓ Remove any debris around the wellhead and turn the electricity back on if no damage is present.
- ✓ Bypass any water filters or softeners that do not have their own shut-off valves to prevent contamination. Run water inside until it runs clear.
- ✓ Test the water for coliform bacteria, E. coli bacteria, and nitrate to ensure it is safe to drink.



The state of Iowa provides free water testing after flooding. Scan the QR code or visit go.unmc.edu/iowa-well-water-testing



The state of Nebraska provides sample kits for nitrate and bacteria at a small charge. Scan the QR code or visit go.unmc.edu/nebraska-water-test-kits

- ✓ Follow laboratory recommendations if water is contaminated and requires disinfection chlorine shock.

RESOURCES



EPA:
Private
Drinking
Water Wells



NEHA:
Floods, Private
Wells, and
Natural Disasters



CDC:
Guidelines for Personal
Hygiene during a Water
Emergency