



Saskatchewan Ministry of Health

Private Water

Systems – Cleaning Up After the Flood

The following information is an excerpt from “Cleaning Up After the Flood: A Guide for Homeowners”, which can be viewed in its entirety on the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health website at <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/cleaning-up-after-a-flood> .

Cisterns

Cisterns must be emptied, thoroughly cleaned, and refilled with potable water. The following procedure should be used to get a cistern back into service.

- Remove all mud, cleaning the cistern thoroughly with a broom or brush.
- Disinfect by filling the cistern with a concentrated solution of chlorine bleach. The chlorine solution can be made by mixing 450 milliliters (2 cups) of household chlorine (5.25% strength) to 450 liters (100 gallons) of water.
- Pump the solution throughout the cistern system and then close all outlets. Operate all valves, faucets and outlets while chlorine is present.
- Allow the chlorine solution to remain in the system for 24 hours.
- After the 24 hours, there should be a chlorine residual of 10 mg/l, which should have a distinct chlorine smell.
- Rinse the cistern system well, as chlorine can corrode metal pipes and tanks.

Notes:

- Portions of the system, such as cistern lids, may not have been adequately disinfected and should be washed and disinfected using an appropriate disinfectant.
- Chlorination may damage certain home water treatment components such as carbon filters, reverse osmosis filters and softeners.
- Heavily chlorinated water should not be discharged to a private sewage system or septic tank.

Wells

If your well has been flooded, you will have to disinfect it before drinking the water. Wells must be thoroughly pumped out and chlorinated prior to using. Follow the procedures below in order to put a well back in service:

- Pump out the well until the water is clear.
- Thoroughly clean bored or dug wells. Remove floating debris and scrub or hose foreign material from well cribbing or casing.
- Pump the well again until the water is clear or for 24 hours, whichever is greater.
- Shock chlorinate the well according to the Province of Saskatchewan's publication entitled "Low Level Chlorine Well Disinfection".
- Bacteriological samples of the well water should be submitted to an accredited laboratory for analysis following the requirements in the Well Disinfection publication. Do not drink the water until sufficient acceptable bacteriological testing results have been received from the laboratory. A minimum of three bacteriological samples should be taken each at least seven days apart, before considering a well supply to be safe.
- Ongoing monthly bacteriological sampling should occur for at least ten months.

Notes:

- Shallow wells may be re-contaminated by polluted groundwater. If a shallow well is present, continued weekly bacteriological testing should be completed for at least ten months.
- Heavily chlorinated water should not be discharged to a private sewage system or septic tank.
- If the well is in a well pit, dangerous gases and a shortage of oxygen may occur. Proper ventilation should be supplied.
- If the groundwater has been contaminated, a new well may not solve your water quality concerns.
- For up-to-date information on water quality testing and best practices, please visit <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/water-testing> and http://www.saskh2o.ca/WaterInformationFactSheet_Drinking_Private_Health.asp

Dugouts and Dams

Follow this procedure to put a dugout back in service:

- Pump out and remove sludge and debris. If this is not feasible, coagulation may help clean up turbidity and nutrient issues.
- Make any repairs required.

- If necessary, refill the dugout.
- Consider installing an appropriate surface water treatment system that includes filtration and disinfection.
- Additional assistance can be obtained from your local Public Health Inspector. The most up-to-date list of contact information for inspectors can be found at:
<http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/public-health-inspectors-contacts>