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Private wells : what to do before and after storms

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Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Private Wells: What to Do Before and After Storms

Before the storm

If you can safely get to the well, inspect it to ensure the well is properly secured and that there are no visible openings.

After the storm

If your well **was NOT flooded**, its water is likely unchanged. No action is necessary.

If your well **was flooded**:

- **Use bottled water** or **water that you boil** for drinking or cooking until you have properly disinfected and tested the well.
- **Disinfect the well** with **unscented** household bleach.
- **Test the water** to make sure the well was properly disinfected, and the water is not contaminated.

Disinfect the Well

- *Before beginning:* If the water is muddy or cloudy, run water from an outside spigot until it runs clear.
- Pour **1 gallon of unscented household bleach** into the well casing.
- Run water from an outside hose into the well casing until you smell a chlorine odor.
- Turn on cold water faucets inside and outside of the home until you smell a chlorine odor. Shut off faucets.
- Wait 6 to 24 hours before you turn the faucets back on. **Do NOT drink, cook, bathe or wash with this water.**
- *After waiting:* Run water from an outside hose into a safe area until you do not smell chlorine.
- DHEC recommends you test the water **7-10 days** after disinfection.
- For complete step-by-step instructions on how to properly disinfect a well, visit epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/emergency-disinfection-drinking-water or scdhec.gov/environment/water-quality/residential-wells/well-water-quality-testing-services.

Test the Water

- Visit a local DHEC health department or regional office and pick up a kit for testing the water. Kits includes a form to fill out, a sterile sample bottle and instructions.
- **Follow the instructions carefully.** Fill up the bottle, complete the form and return the sample back to the DHEC regional office or local health department. **Sample must be returned THE DAY it was collected.**
- DHEC recommends you use bottled or boiled water until you get your water test results showing your water is safe to drink.

If you have questions or need help, please call DHEC's [Private Well Hotline](tel:1-888-761-5989) at 1-888-761-5989.
