



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Community Health and the Environment**

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### **Well Water Safety During Floods**

**St. Charles County, Missouri** – As floodwaters continue to rise in parts of St. Charles County, the Department of Community Health and the Environment is keeping a close watch on health and safety issues for residents. Many people who live in rural areas of the county depend on wells for their drinking water. However, these wells can become contaminated by floodwater, which poses a significant health risk. To help citizens prepare for and respond to this emergency, below is some important information from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

If the well casing is submerged in floodwater, **DO NOT USE THE WATER**. Water from submerged wells cannot be safely sanitized. When flooding subsides, small quantities of water may be disinfected until the well can be properly chlorinated.

After floodwaters recede, wells can be disinfected with chlorine. The most convenient and inexpensive form to use is plain liquid laundry bleach. Most of these products contain 5.25 percent solution of sodium hypochlorite, which is equivalent to five percent available chlorine.

As water is used, the pressure drops, and at a preset limit the pump turns on, creating a short surge. A pump not running for a period of time due to a power loss is no different than the family leaving the home for a period of time and not using water. Unless there is some risk factor compounded by the power outage, there is minimal risk of contamination during the outage.

Other factors of concern that could compound with a power outage to affect water safety may include:

- Known system problems, such as line breaks or system leaks
- Past system problems, including a history of unsafe samples
- Hoses left in stock watering tanks, swimming pools, or other unsafe water sources without a backflow prevention device at the time of the outage

The loss of power disables water disinfection systems, such as UV lights or chlorination systems. Private well users uncertain as to the functioning of their disinfection system after an outage, or the quality of water stored during the outage, should contact a water service professional or the county health department.

After a flood, testing your well for bacterial condition and disinfecting the system may be advisable. Information on well disinfection from the Department of Health and Senior Services is available on the Internet at [www.dhss.mo.gov/BT\\_Response/Nat\\_Disaster/index.htm](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/Nat_Disaster/index.htm).

All homeowners using private wells are encouraged to test their water at least once a year, regardless of any flooding or power interruptions. Homeowners who do not know the past history of their well, or who have lingering concerns about their water quality, may also choose to have their well tested. Water testing kits and additional information on well disinfection can be obtained from the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment by calling (636) 949-1800 or by logging on to [www.scchealth.org](http://www.scchealth.org).

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