



Clinton County Health Department

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

“Working Together for a Healthier Community”

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Clinton County Health Department Press Release Drinking Water Safety after a Flood April 29, 2011

Many areas in Clinton County have been affected by flooding caused by recent heavy rains and heavy winter snow melt. Water levels are expected to continue to rise and crest at historic levels. Home owners that live along flood prone areas should be taking action to protect their property, but more important be prepared to leave their homes if rising waters endanger them or their families.

Private well owners should take actions to ensure their private well water supply is safe for consumption after a flood. When a water supply well has been affected by flood waters, the water within the well may be contaminated with waterborne pathogens (germs) that can cause serious illness in humans and pets. If you suspect that your well has been contaminated, discontinue using your well water for drinking and cooking purposes, and use only disinfected or bottled water. Contact the Clinton County Health Department for fact sheets and instructions on proper clean-up, disinfection and sampling to make sure your drinking water is safe.

Drinking water wells can also be contaminated by fuel oil or other chemical products released during the flood (such as from home oil tanks and agricultural tanks). **If you believe your well may be contaminated by petroleum or other chemicals do not use your well and immediately contact your local Health Department or the Department of Environmental Conservation Spill Hotline at 1-800-457-7362.**

A flood will leave warning signs that a well may be unsafe. Below are some things that a well owner can look for, any one of these signs may indicate that a well is contaminated.

1. **Question: Is the well located in or near the area that was flooded?**

If your well was submerged in flood water, the well water is probably contaminated. Even if you did not see the area during the flood, debris and mud in the area and water or mud stains on the well can indicate that the well was flooded.

2. **Question: Is the ground surface around the well intact and stable?**

During flooding the ground around the well may erode, possibly creating unsafe conditions or a pathway for surface water and contaminants to enter the well.

3. **Question: Are there any electrical components or wires visible?**

Visible electrical wires may be dangerous and should be avoided due to electrical shock. If electrical connections or controls located outside the well casing remain submerged, turning on the pump may cause electrical shock or damage to the system. A qualified electrician should be contacted.

4. **Question: Is any damage to the well casing visible?**

A bent or cracked well casing may allow surface water, sediment and debris to enter the well and will increase the risk of contamination.

5. **Question: Is the well cap and seal securely fastened to the well casing?**

A loose well cap can allow sediment and debris to enter the well and contaminate it.

6. **Does my well have a pump?**

Most private wells have the pump located inside the well casing and are submerged, so well owners will probably not be able to inspect the pump. Well owners should contact a qualified professional, registered well driller or pump contractor, to evaluate and service well pumps.

If you determine that your well has been flooded, do not turn on your well pump until the well has been assessed and repaired as needed. **Do not drink or wash** with well water until the well has been restored by proper disinfection and flushing. Proper well disinfection information can be found on our web site at www.clintonhealth.org. For more information please contact the Clinton County Health Department – Environmental Unit at 518-565-4870.

Endorsed By: _____

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