

Flooding Can Contaminate Your Well or Spring

The information on this page is for residential private water systems (wells and springs). If you draw your residential drinking water from a private intake of lake or surface water source, **do not use the water** and reach out to a Department of Environmental Conservation regional engineer for guidance

If you pay a water bill, you are on public water. Please go to [Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Flood Recovery website](#) for more information.

Water may not be safe to use for drinking, cooking or cleaning after a flood. During and after flooding, private wells and springs can become contaminated with bacteria, microorganisms and other pollutants from sewage, heating oil, agricultural or industrial waste, chemicals, and other substances that can cause serious illness. **Assume your water is contaminated if floodwater has reached your well or spring, and do not use it for drinking until you know it is safe.**

Image



NEW

Free Drinking Water Test Kits

The State is offering free drinking water testing for private wells and springs impacted by flooding. Call the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory at 802-338-4724 to order free test kits.

Flooding Near Your Well or Spring

Do not use the water from your well or spring until you have it tested and you know it's safe, especially if:

- It was or is covered with floodwaters or located near flooding

- It smells sweet or smells like fuel or chemicals, or is near a suspected fuel or chemical spill

Inspect Your Water System for Flood Impacts

If you did not see the area during the flood, debris and mud in the area and water or mud stains on the well or in a spring may indicate that your system was flooded.

1. If it is safe to do so, inspect electrical components:
 - Look for exposed/damaged wiring or electrical components.
 - Check whether water entered any electrical components. Do not touch electrical wires.
 - If electrical connections or controls located outside the well casing or spring box remain submerged, do not turn on the pump until the floodwater has gone down.
2. Check for damaged structural components of the water system.
 - Check the well casing - A bent/cracked well casing may allow water, sediment and debris to enter the well and increase the risk of contamination.
 - Check the well cap and seal to make sure they are securely fastened to the well casing. Sediment and debris may enter the well through a loose well cap.
 - Inspect spring box tiles and structural components to see if they are sealed and remained in place.

If Your Well or Spring Has Been Affected by Flooding

1. Until your water has been tested, **do not use it** for:
 - Drinking
 - Cooking

- Washing dishes
- Making juice or ice
- Washing fruit and vegetables
- Brushing teeth
- Preparing baby formula

2. Get water from a known safe source.

- Fill food-safe containers with water from a known safe source, like the town library, town hall, fire department, school, church or town office.
- Buy bottled water. Find a [list of bottled water systems](#) with no detections of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).
- Buy water from a bulk water hauler and fill up a water tank. Find a [list of bulk water haulers](#) or do an internet search for "bulk water haulers Vermont."
- If getting water from a known safe source is not an option, **boiling your water for one minute** will kill bacteria and other microorganisms that may be in the water. Please note that boiling water may concentrate some common flood contaminants, like nitrates, that are especially harmful to young children. **Do not use boiled water for preparing baby formula.** Do not boil water if you:
 - Smell or see signs of chemicals in your water
 - Suspect there was a nearby fuel or chemical spill
 - See that the water is cloudy or full of sediments.
- **Do not** fill your contaminated well or spring with water delivered by a water hauler. Instead, store the water in food-safe containers.

3. If heating fuel or chemicals are known to have been spilled near your well or spring, call the [Vermont Department of Environmental](#)

Conservation (DEC) Spill Management during business hours (7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) at 802-828-1138 or outside business hours at 800-641-5005 to report the spill. **Do not drink the water** if you suspect a fuel or chemical spill has impacted your well or if your water smells sweet or like fuel or chemicals.

4. Have your water tested even if there was no fuel or chemical spill. Bacteria and nitrate are some of the most common drinking water contaminants after a flood. **The State is offering free drinking water testing for wells and springs impacted by flooding.** Call the Vermont Department of Health Laboratory at 802-338-4724 to order free test kits.
5. Before taking a water sample:
 - Remove any visible mud, sediment, and other debris from around the well casing or from within the spring box.
 - If your water is muddy or cloudy, run the water from an outside spigot with a hose attached until the water becomes clear and free of sediments. This may take 30 minutes to several hours or days, depending on the size and depth of the well or spring and extent of contamination.
6. If your water source is contaminated with bacteria, **disinfect your well or spring** once the floodwater has gone down. If you need assistance with disinfection, contact a **local well driller or water quality expert.**
7. **Until the test results show there are no bacteria or other harmful contaminants, do not use the water** for drinking, cooking and food preparation, making juice or ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, making baby formula/bottles, or washing fruit and vegetables.
8. For assistance with replacing a failed water system, call a **licensed well driller or your regional engineer** for information on permits and permit exemptions.

You may also be having problems with your septic system. Find resources to help you with your septic system

Emergency Information and Resources

- **Dial 911 for Fire, Police or Ambulance**
- **Dial 2-1-1** for health and human services information, or visit vermont211.org for shelters
- **Visit 511vt.gov** for Vermont road conditions
- National Weather Service
- Vermont Emergency Management
- If you own a food or lodging business, call the Food & Lodging Program at 802-863-7221 or 800-439-8550 (toll-free in Vermont)