

Guidance for Using Well Water After a Wildfire

After a wildfire, there is a possibility that well water could be contaminated with bacteria and chemicals. Consuming contaminated water can make you sick.

If wildfire has affected your property or was burning at or close to your well or piping, it may have damaged and contaminated your private water system. This contamination could be a result of the fire itself, the materials used to extinguish the fire, or from chemicals that enter the water supply from items such as damaged oil tanks or burned pipes or wellheads.

Immediate actions post-wildfire:

1. **Stop using well water and test water quality:** Do not use well water for drinking or making beverages (such as infant formula or juice), making ice, washing fruits and vegetables, brushing teeth, cooking, or washing until it has been tested and deemed safe.
2. **Inspect well and repair damage:** Hire a licensed well drilling contractor to inspect and repair any damage to your well. A list of licensed well drillers can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/groundwater/wells_groundwater/well-driller-contractors/index.html#class1

To prepare your well for testing, follow these steps:

1. **Flush the well:** Run a tap furthest down the service line until the water runs clear.
2. **Disinfect or shock the well:** Instructions on how to disinfect your well can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/well-videos/index.html
3. **Flush the well again:** After disinfection, run the same tap long enough to remove all disinfectant from the well.
4. **Test for bacteria:** Test the water for bacteria (total coliform and *E. coli*) at an accredited lab before using it for anything other than household cleaning. The Manitoba government offers private well and cistern owners a once-a year subsidy to test for bacteria. For more information visit www.gov.mb.ca/sd/pubs/water/drinking_water/privatewell_testing_subsidy.pdf.
5. **Test for chemicals:** Conduct chemical testing at an accredited lab if:
 - There was a spill near your well (such as from a damaged oil tank).
 - Firefighting activities (such as water bombing) occurred near your well. Information on the foam concentrate used by the Wildfire Service is available in the Safety Data Sheet found at www.perimeter-solutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PHOS-CHEK-WD881-EN-OSHA-WHMIS-GHS-SDS-2020-06-18.pdf.
 - The water appears cloudy or has an unusual smell.
 - It has been two years since the last chemical test.

Contact an accredited laboratory directly to determine if they can run specific chemical analyses you may need.

Accredited Laboratories in Manitoba:

ALS Environmental
1329 Niakwa Road E #12
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3T4
Phone: 204-255-9720
www.alsglobal.com

Duracan
862 Dufferin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 0A3
Phone: 204-960-9995
www.duracan.ca

Bureau Veritas
675 Berry Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 1A7
Phone: 204-772-7276
<https://group.bureauveritas.com>

Horizon Lab
4055 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3K 2E8
Phone: 204-488-2035
www.horizonlab.ca

Central Testing Laboratory
Unit 9 – 851 Lagimodiere Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3K4
Phone: 204-237-9128
www.ctl.mb.ca

After receiving test results

If your well water does not run clear or tests positive for bacteria or chemicals, or for more information on drinking water safety, water treatment devices, or for help with interpreting your test results, contact the Office of Drinking Water at 204-945-5762 or odw@gov.mb.ca for advice.

More information on how to maintain your well and interpret the results of your water test is available on our website at www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/well-videos/index.html.