

WILDFIRE & WATER

Considerations for drinking water safety and water system repair

Maintaining Access to Safe Drinking Water After a Fire

After a wildfire, there may be chemical or microbial contaminants in your drinking water. Be sure to follow local boil water advisories and other safety directions. If you get your water from a public system, immediately contact your utility. Individual well owners should contact their local health department. If you are uncertain if your well has been impacted, check with local agencies, re-test your water, and use alternate sources of drinking water. [Find your local health jurisdiction.](#)

Tips:

- Stay alert to advisories from local health officials.
- If your well has lost pressure, DO NOT use the water until it has been tested. To check for loss of pressure, turn on an exterior faucet to see if there is water flowing or spurting. Intermittent spurting indicates a loss of pressure.
- If water has a different color or odor than normal, DO NOT use it until it has been tested.
- Avoid running water through household piping until you are sure it is not contaminated.
- If your well has physical damage, DO NOT use the water. Seek advice from your local health department and hire a licensed professional to complete repairs.
- Boiling water and bleach may help with microbial contaminants but will not eliminate chemical contamination. If there is no concern of chemical contamination, you can use these [disinfection methods](#).
- Consider adding flood protection to your well head if you are in an area at risk of post-fire flooding.



A fired damaged well cap. Photo: Center for Disease Control.

If water utilities, local health departments, or other government agencies are not performing testing, seek out services from a professional lab. At a minimum, water should be tested for coliform bacteria. If chemical contamination is suspected, ask the lab about testing for volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

[DEPT. OF ECOLOGY LAB SEARCH TOOL](#)

[ACTIVE DRINKING WATER ALERTS](#)

*FOR THOSE ON GROUP A PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

Resources for Well Users

[After a Wildfire: Water Safety Considerations for Private Wells](#) (Purdue University)

[What to do if my well is damaged by a wildfire?](#) (The Private Well Class)

[Rapid Assessment Form for Wells Affected by Wildfire](#) (Center for Disease Control)

[Private Wells After a Wildfire](#) (Center for Disease Control)

Resources for Water Utility Users

[After a Wildfire: Water Safety Considerations Inside Buildings](#) (Purdue University)

Resources for Septic System Users

[Guidance for Septic Systems Before, During, and After a Wildfire](#) (National Environmental Health Association)