



## GUIDE 1: GENERAL FLOOD INFORMATION

### Avoid Flooded Areas

- **Do not swim or bathe in rivers, streams, creeks, or lakes in flooded areas.** Flood waters may contain sewage, fertilizer, manure, gas, pesticides, hazardous materials, large pieces of debris (such as tree limbs, boulders, metal objects, and sharp objects like glass, nails, fence posts, etc.).
- **Contact your local parks department for monitoring information about public beaches and access points to surface water.** Additional information on recreational water can also be found at the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene webpage ([slh.wisc.edu](http://slh.wisc.edu)).

### Ensure You Have Safe Water

#### Municipal Water Users

- Turn on and run faucets for at least five minutes before using water for drinking or food preparation.
- If a "boil water" notice is issued, follow any directions given by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, local water utility, or local health department.

#### Private Well Owners

- Private well owners that are concerned that their well has been affected by a flood should assume that the well is contaminated. Signs that a well may be affected by a flood include:
  - Floodwaters come into contact or run over the top of a well
  - You notice changes in the taste, smell, or color of the water
  - You have a shallow well and live near areas that have been flooded.
- Do not drink or bathe in water from a private well that has been or is flooded.

- Disinfect your well and plumbing system if you suspect your well has been affected by a flood. This procedure is best done by a licensed well driller or pump installer with the expertise and equipment. However, if you decide to do disinfect the well by yourself, carefully follow the steps in Guide 3 on Well Disinfection.
- After the well is disinfected, wait about a week before testing your water for bacteria contamination. To test your water supply yourself, obtain a well water sampling kit from your local public health department.
- Until the test results are known, follow these procedures to ensure safe drinking water:
  - Drink bottled water or water from a known, safe source.
  - If necessary, you can make water safe to drink by boiling it for five minutes.
- If the test results come back negative or “safe,” the water may be safe to drink, but re-test the water in another month to be sure. Also, be on the lookout for changes in taste, smell, or color.
- If the test results come back positive or “unsafe”:
  - Re-test the well to be sure of the result.
  - If the re-test is also positive or “unsafe,” do not use the well water for drinking or food preparation.
  - Work with a licensed well driller or pump installer to try to figure out what’s wrong and take steps to address the problem. You can find one of these professionals by visiting [dnr.wi.gov/topic/wells/contacts.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wells/contacts.html) or searching “well drilling service” or “pump service” in the phone book.
- When in doubt, if the water is cloudy, smells bad, or colored, do not drink it!

## Clean Up If Your Sewage System Floods

- After a flood, private sewage systems are no longer reliable. Portable toilets or other facilities should be used.
- Any areas with sewage backflow from your septic or municipal water system through flood drains, toilets, etc., such as basements, must be cleaned and disinfected with a chlorine solution. Anything that cannot be cleaned should be thrown out.

