



# Plumas County Environmental Health

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## WATER WELL RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS AFTER A WILDFIRE

*The use of private well water is the responsibility of the individual property owner to ensure that the drinking water supply is safe by having the well water tested by a CA State certified laboratory.*

As an owner of a private domestic water supply well that may be damaged by wildfire, you may have concerns about fire related impacts to your well and water system. Plumas County Environmental Health recommends the well owner perform a visual inspection of their well and water system, including the piping that provides water to, and throughout, your home. Items that should be checked include:

- Damaged or exposed electrical wiring poses an electrical shock hazard.
- Damaged or melted PVC casing, liner or pipe.
- Damaged well houses, pressure tanks, and other equipment such as water filters, and electronic controls.
- Damaged storage tanks, tank vents, and piping.
- Debris, such as ash and/or sediment in wells or storage tanks.

*Please Note:* *Building permits are required for repairs to electrical work.*

If your well has been damaged by fire, contact a C-57 licensed water well contractor to evaluate the extent of damages and determine what must be done to either repair or destroy the well. A current and valid well permit issued by Plumas County Environmental Health is required to drill or destroy a water well.

If the inspection finds the water system is damaged, it is likely that the water is contaminated with bacteria or by chemicals released from the piping due to heat.

- Anytime there is a complete loss of pressure, or repairs occur, the system should be disinfected and tested to ensure the water is safe for human consumption.
- Anytime a pipe or other water conducting device has been heated by fire, the system should be tested for the presence of Benzene, a by-product of melted plastic piping or plastic lining in a pressure tank.

### Testing Your Well for Bacteria and for Benzene:

When testing drinking water for the presence of bacteria and benzene, it is necessary to collect the appropriate samples and deliver them to a CA-certified laboratory. Samples must be collected, only in the specific containers provided by, and sampled according to the instructions from the laboratory. A list of CA-certified laboratories can be found at: [https://plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/1765/water\\_sample\\_testing\\_labs](https://plumascounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/1765/water_sample_testing_labs)

### Well Disinfection Procedure for Bacteria:

- a) Close all faucets.
- b) Pour ½ gallon of household CLOROX brand unscented bleach into the top of the well casing.
- c) Flow water from farthest point from the well and let the water run until you smell chlorine then close the faucet. Follow this same process for all other faucets - one at a time.
- d) Allow the chlorine to remain in the system for 24 hours without any water usage.
- e) After 24 hours, repeat instruction "c)" but let water run until you no longer smell chlorine.
- f) Collect a sample from a cold water faucet used by the home, and submit the water sample following the instructions of the CA-certified laboratory.
- g) If the test results for Coliform indicate unsafe conditions, repeat the disinfection procedure and resample.

If the water system is found to show the presence of benzene, or bacteria, or for information on well repairs, well destruction, or well reconstruction, please contact Plumas County Environmental Health at (530) 283-6355.