

September 27, 2017

Free testing for your private water well after a flood

COLLEGE STATION — If your well has been flooded, you should assume that the water in it is contaminated. Do not use the well water for drinking, cooking, making ice, brushing your teeth or even bathing until you are satisfied that it is not contaminated.

Floodwater can be contaminated by substances from upstream, such as manure, sewage from flooded septic systems or wastewater treatment plants, and pesticides or fertilizer applied to cropland that was flooded. A septic system near a well also can cause contamination when the soil is flooded.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Virginia Tech are offering free well water testing to private well users who were affected by Hurricane Harvey. Study results to better understand the impact of floods on private well water and communication strategies. Test kits will be distributed in several locations, but any homeowner with a private water well in the flood-affected area is eligible. There are a limited number of kits, which will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The samples will be analyzed for coliform bacteria by Virginia Tech, and confidential water quality results will be emailed and mailed to residents' homes.

Residents who want to have their well water tested should pick up a water sampling test kit starting Sept. 29 at the temporary office of the Matagorda County Extension Service located at 1700 7th street on the 3rd floor kitchen of the Courthouse in Bay City. Instructions will be included with the kits, but the well owners should be available to take the sample and drop it off on Oct.9 from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Instructions for decontaminating a well are available through the following publications free for download at <http://twon.tamu.edu/fact-sheets/>: [Decontaminating Flooded Water Wells](#) and [Shock Chlorination of Wells](#).

After a flood, inspect the well for physical damage and look for signs of leakage. If it appears damaged, consult a licensed water well contractor to determine whether repairs are needed. Also, flooding can damage the well pump and electrical systems. If the pump and/or electrical system has been under water and it is not designed to be under water, do not turn on the pump. There is a potential for electrical shock or damage to your well or pump. Once the floodwaters have receded and the pump and electrical system have dried, have a qualified electrician, well driller or pump installer check the wiring system and other well components.