

WELL WATER SAFETY AFTER WILDFIRES

When emergencies such as wildfires occur, the safety of your private well water can be compromised - often without visible signs. Heat, smoke, and chemicals used in firefighting can damage well components and contaminate groundwater. Whether you rely on your well for drinking, cooking, or daily hygiene, it's essential to know how to protect your water supply and ensure it remains safe for use.

After a Wildfire

Do Not Use Well Water For:

- Drinking
- Cooking
- Bathing or showering
- Brushing teeth
- Washing open wounds
- Preparing infant formula

Use bottled water or water from a safe alternative source until you well has been inspected, disinfected and tested.

How Wildfires Can Contaminate Wells:

Wildfires can introduce contaminants into your well system from a variety of sources:

- **Ash and debris** entering the wellhead or casing
- **Melted well components** (e.g., caps, casing, pipes) releasing toxic substances
- **Firefighting chemicals**, such as foams or retardants
- **Spilled Fuels or chemicals** from nearby structures or tanks
- **Compromised septic systems** affecting nearby groundwater

Steps to Take After a Wildfire

- **Stop using well water immediately.**
- **Visually inspect** the well and area around it:
 - Look for damage to the well casing, cap, wires, or plumbing
 - Check for signs of melted plastic or heat damage
- **Contact a licenced well driller** for inspection and repairs.
- **Disinfect the well** only after it's been inspected and deemed safe to do so.
 - Find instructions on our website at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/ecc/waterres/groundwater/well/disinfecting/>
- **Test** water for microbial (e.g., E. Coli) and chemical contaminants.
- **Continue using an alternate water source** until lab results confirm your water is safe.

To find out more, please visit Environment and Climate Change's website at www.gov.nl.ca/ecc/water.

You can also contact an Environmental Health Officer or Program Manager at the nearest Government Service Centre, NL Health Services, or a water resources official with ECC.