



# County of Santa Cruz

## Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health Division

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## Water Wells and Springs

### Conditions at the Well

If you are the owner of a private water well or spring, you may have some concerns about fire related impacts to your water system. After a wildfire, underground well components like the pump may not be harmed. However, if your home and yard have been burned, it is necessary to complete a visual inspection of your well system and have any damage repaired before turning on the water. Check the following for damage:

- Damage to the wellhead including casing, cap or seal
- Damage to any above ground piping or liner
- Damaged spring box
- Damage to well houses, pressure tanks, and filters
- Electrical damage including wiring and controls
- Damage to storage tanks, vents, and overflow pipes
- Debris, such as ash and sediment entering uncovered wells, springs, or storage tanks

Contact a licensed and bonded well contractor or pump installer immediately for repairs. Shock chlorination or disinfection should be performed after repairs are made. Your well contractor will determine if this is required. It is important to note that shock chlorination/disinfection will not remove metals, pesticides, or other types of non-biological contamination. If your well was damaged by fire we recommend that you do not drink or cook with the water until a water test is performed and confirms no harmful contaminants are in your water.

### Water Treatment

Water treatment systems may also be damaged from the fire. Contact your water treatment professional to repair any damaged treatment devices before use. Water testing should be performed once the treatment device is back in service. Use an alternative source, such as bottled water, for drinking and cooking until water testing proves the water is safe for all uses.

### If You Have Had Loss of Water Pressure

If your visual inspection shows that there was a loss of pressure or the water system has been damaged, it is likely that your water may be contaminated with bacteria. Damaged components should be repaired or replaced. Anytime a water system loses pressure, the water should be tested for the presence of bacteria before it is used for drinking or cooking. Anytime the well or water system is repaired, it should be disinfected after a repair is made and then tested to ensure the water is safe for drinking or cooking.

### Water Flushing and Testing

If your well was in an affected area, you may notice the water smells earthy, smoky, or burnt. You should flush your well system thoroughly before use. Contamination concerns arise from chemicals and microorganisms that can enter a damaged well. At a minimum, water testing of affected wells should consist of ammonia, bacteria, benzene, PAH, nitrate, PFAS, sulfate, and turbidity. However, you may also consider testing for iron, metals