

## LOSS OF PRESSURE:

If your visual inspection shows that there was a loss of pressure, it is likely that your water may have become contaminated with bacteria. Anytime a water system loses pressure, whether it is a regulated public water system or a private domestic well, the water should be tested for the presence of bacteria before it is used for drinking or cooking. While you are waiting to receive the results of bacteria testing you can boil the water you will be using for drinking and cooking for 2 to 5 minutes. When boiling is not practical, use common household liquid bleach that has 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite listed on the label. Make sure the bleach is free of perfumes and added scents. Follow the disinfection instructions on the label for drinking water. If there are no instructions on the label:

1. Use 2 drops of liquid bleach per quart of water. Double the amount if the water is cloudy or contains many floating particulates.
2. The disinfected water should have a slight chlorine odor; if not, add one more drop of liquid bleach.
3. Mix thoroughly and allow to stand for 30 minutes before using the water.

## WHERE CAN I FIND ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

You can get answers to any additional questions you have regarding your private domestic well and the quality and safety of your water by contacting:



**Mariposa County Health  
Environmental Health Division  
(209) 966-2220**

[www.mariposacounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/42619](http://www.mariposacounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/42619)

# PRIVATE WELLS

after

# THE FIRE

*A private  
well owner's guide  
to protecting your  
drinking water source*

**Mariposa County Health  
Environmental Health Division  
(209) 966-2220**

## PRIVATE DOMESTIC WELL OWNERS AFTER THE FIRE

As an owner of a private domestic well that was affected by a wild fire, you may have some concerns about fire related impacts to your well. The Environmental Health Division has designed this brochure to help you ensure that your well water is safe to drink.

Perform a visual inspection of your well and all of the other equipment that brings water to your household. The things you should be looking for include:

## WELLS

- Damage to electrical wires and connectors which supply power to your well.
- Damage to above ground PVC pipes used with the well to bring water to your home.
- Damage to well houses and equipment such as chlorinators, filters and electronic controls.
- Damage to pressure tanks which could have been caused by exposure to excessive heat.
- Damage to storage tanks, vents and overflow pipes.
- If any damage is found, you should contact the appropriate licensed contractor or trade worker to repair the damage.

## WATER TASTE AND ODORS:

You may notice that your water tastes or smells earthy, smokey or burnt. If so, you may need to thoroughly flush your water lines.

## GETTING YOUR WATER TESTED FOR BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION:

When testing drinking water for the presence of bacteria, it is necessary to collect a sample and deliver it to a certified environmental testing laboratory. See the back page for information on getting a list of certified environmental testing labs in your area. Laboratories generally charge between \$20 and \$50 for a bacteria test. Bacteria samples must be collected in an approved container, which is available from the laboratory. When collecting a sample, follow these procedures:

1. Write your name, address and phone number on the laboratory form and sample container with a water resistant pen. On the form, indicate that you would like the sample analyzed with a drinking water method for total coliform bacteria.
2. Collect the sample from a clean inside faucet.
3. If there is an aerator or screen on the faucet, remove it before you collect the sample and insure the faucet and sink are clean.
4. You should turn the faucet on with a full steady flow of water and let it run for approximately 1 minute.
5. After the faucet has run for a minute, reduce the flow to a small steady stream. Do not turn the faucet all the way off.
6. Place the sample container from the laboratory under the stream of water, being careful not to touch the inside or edges.
7. Fill the sample container to the fill line, and then immediately seal it, and turn off the faucet.
8. Place the sample in the lab container and be sure to follow any sample chilling procedures provided by the laboratory.

## CAN I USE MY WATER WHILE I'M WAITING FOR THE TEST RESULTS?

Yes, you can use your water for showering and flushing toilets. Take care to avoid swallowing water from showers or baths. You should not use your water for drinking or cooking purposes unless you have boiled or disinfected it. This includes not washing dishes or other cooking utensils in it. The water is safe for your animals.

## INSIDE THE HOUSEHOLD:

You should check to see if your well and piping system maintained positive pressure during the fire. This can be done by turning on a faucet in the household to see if water comes out. You should not hear any air being released from the faucet. The flow of water should be steady and uninterrupted. If you do hear air escaping from the faucet with water intermittently spurting out when it is turned on, that is an indication that your well and household plumbing had a loss of pressure.

## HOW CAN I DISINFECT MY WELL AND PIPES WHILE WAITING FOR SAMPLE RESULTS?

1. Pour 1.5 cups of bleach (5.25 percent chlorine) into well: Wait 30 minutes.
2. Open taps at farthest ends of system and dead ends until chlorine is smelled. Then close taps.
3. Let well stand 24 hours without pumping.
4. Open taps and flush lines until a chlorine odor is no longer detectable.