



Ford County Public Health Department
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Health Points-Flooding and your water well/septic system

The Ford County Health Department would like to share some information on flooding, particularly for those with water wells, going into this year's rainy season. Your water well is a potential source of contaminants such as E-coli and coliform bacteria. Regular maintenance and testing can ensure safe drinking water for your family.

Water wells can be a source of contamination through overloading of the ground water supply. Floods can bring in contaminants from septic systems, agricultural dangers such as pesticides and fertilizers, and other sources that could get into your drinking water. In addition, coarse sediment and debris can cause physical damage to your well. Electrical components, such as the pump, also run the risk of electrical shock when flooded. In this case, do not use rubber boots. Instead turn off the pump if able and contact a professional electrician.

Wells should be considered contaminated until they have been properly tested. It is recommended to use boiled or bottled water following a flood until the water has been tested. This includes drinking, cooking, and bathing. You can pick up a kit for free water testing at the Ford County Health Department. Results will be given back with disinfecting procedures if required.

Besides being a source of contamination to your groundwater, special precautions also need to be made for your septic system:

- Do not use the sewage system until water in the soil absorption field is lower than the water level around the house.
- Plug all basement drains.
- Limit water usage.
- Have your septic tank professionally inspected and serviced if you suspect damage.
- Only trained specialists should clean or repair septic tanks because of possible dangerous gases.
- If sewage has backed up into the basement, clean the area and disinfect the floor using a chlorine solution of a half cup of bleach to each gallon of water.
- Examine electrical connections for damage before restoring electricity.
- Do not compact soil over the absorption field by driving equipment or vehicles over it.
- Be sure the tank's manhole cover is secure and that inspection ports have not been blocked or damaged.
- Check vegetation and repair as necessary to provide turf grass cover.
- Have your system pumped once safe levels have been reached. Your servicing contractor should know when this is.

Water and sewage safety are extremely important in the event of a flood. Follow all necessary precautions and if you have any questions contact the health department at (217) 379-9281. We are located at 235 North Taft Street in Paxton if you would like to have a free water test kit.