



Jeb Bush
Governor

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A.
Secretary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: TIM O'CONNOR
561-355-3576 722-6017

HURRICANE FRANCIS CLEAN-UP--UPDATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE WELL INSPECTIONS

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL—The Palm Beach County Health Department is testing private wells in the county to assist residents in determining the safety of their drinking water.

Environmental Health officials began advising on disinfection procedures Friday and taking samples for laboratory testing. Many homes have been without power and have had contaminated water invade their wells during flooding. Environmental Health Director Frank Gargiulo said, "It is very important for people to take all the necessary steps to disinfect their wells especially in areas where there has been flooding. As a final step before drinking, people should add eight drops of chlorine per gallon of water and let it sit for about 30 minutes. "

Residents in flooded areas can call the health department at 561-514-5370 to request advice on disinfection and to schedule an inspector to take a water sample for testing.

HOW DO I DISINFECT MY WELL?

It is important to disinfect both the well and plumbing with chlorine bleach to ensure that all infectious agents are killed. If you have water treatment devices, remove all membranes, cartridges, and filters and replace them after the chlorination process is completed.

The amount of chlorine and the length of time you allow it to remain in your system are equally important. Common unscented laundry bleach can be used effectively as a chlorine disinfectant. See the chart for the recommended amounts of chlorine bleach to use and follow these steps:

- If the water is discolored before chlorination, run the water until it is clear for up to 10 minutes.
- Turn off and then drain your hot water heater—chlorine is not effective in water above 105 degrees.
- Remove and replace charcoal filters after the chlorination process is completed.



Post Office Box 29 / 826 Evernia Street, West Palm Beach, FL 33402
Jean M. Malecki, MD, MPH, FACPM, Director
www.pbchd.com



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- To avoid adding contamination to the well during disinfection, first clean the work area around the top of the well. Remove grease and mineral deposits from accessible parts of the wellhead and flush the outside surfaces with 1/2 cup of laundry bleach in 5 gallons of water.
- Turn off the pump. Remove the cap or the well plug on the rubber seal. There are many types of well caps and plugs. If you have questions, you should contact a licensed well driller. If you have a submersible pump, you may also want to contact a licensed well driller for advice on disinfection procedures.
- Consult the chlorine bleach chart and pour the recommended amount of bleach solution into the well.

Try to coat the sides of the casing as you pour. If you get chlorine on the pump or wiring, flush it thoroughly with fresh water to prevent later corrosion. Your county health department may issue additional guidance for your area.

- Re-cap or plug the well opening and wait 30 minutes.
- Turn on and, if needed, reprime the pump. Open all of the faucets on the system one by one. Allow the water to run until there is a noticeable smell of chlorine. You may also want to flush the toilets. If you have outside faucets, you may want to direct the water away from sensitive plants. If you cannot detect a chlorine odor, re-chlorinate the well.
- Turn off all of the faucets and allow the chlorine to remain in the system for at least eight hours.
- Backwash water softeners, sand filters, and iron removal filters with chlorinated water.
- Again open all of the faucets and run the water until there is no chlorine smell—for up to 15 minutes.

IS IT SAFE NOW?

The only way to verify that the water is safe to drink is to have it tested. Although chlorine bleach is effective against microorganisms, it will not remove chemical contamination that may have gotten into your well. Contact your county health department for sampling instructions to get your water test

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