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WEST VIRGINIA BUREAU FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
PUBLIC HEALTH SANITATION DIVISION

DISINFECTING THE WATER SUPPLY AFFECTED BY FLOOD WATERS

Flooded private wells, springs, cisterns, pumps, and pipes need to be tested and disinfected after flood waters recede. Using contaminated water for drinking, washing dishes, brushing teeth, washing and preparing food, and making ice may lead to serious illness or even death.

"THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK"

The following procedures may be used to disinfect water supplies:

Use a commercial laundry bleach containing five and one-quarter percent (5 1/4%) available chlorine. The label on the container will indicate the percentage of available chlorine in the bleach.

Prepare a five (5) gallon batch of disinfectant by pouring one (1) gallon of the laundry bleach into four (4) gallons of water.

Once the flood water has receded:

a. Remove any debris from water supply.
b. Pour one half (2 ½ gallons) of the disinfectant batch into the well, spring, cistern or reservoir.
c. Start pump, hose down the inside of the well, and open ALL taps until water from each tap has a distinct chlorine odor. If supply has a hand pump, pump the water to waste until water coming from pump spout has a distinct chlorine odor. (If there isn't a pump on the water supply, pour the entire batch of disinfectant into the water supply.)
d. Pour remaining batch of disinfectant into well, and allow solution to remain in water supply for twelve (12) to twenty-four (24) hours.
e. Pump the supply to waste or until odor of chlorine disappears. Adjust the flow of water from the faucets or fixtures that discharge into septic systems to a low flow to avoid overloading the disposal system. (If there isn't a pump on the supply, use a bucket or bailer to remove the water from the water supply.)
f. **Request your local health department to collect samples before water is used.**
g. Disinfection of an improperly protected supply will not insure its safety. Immediate steps should be taken to abandon or reconstruct such supplies so that they will be protected against any further contamination. Contact your health department for information on how to properly protect a water supply.

REMEMBER - THIS PROCESS OF DISINFECTION IS ONLY TEMPORARY. ONLY WATER IN THE SUPPLY AT TIME OF TREATMENT IS DISINFECTED. FRESH WATER ENTERING INTO THE SUPPLY MAY BE CONTAMINATED. TO INSURE SAFETY ALWAYS HAVE A SLIGHT TASTE OF CHLORINE PRESENT IN THE WATER.