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## Headline

Recent heavy thunderstorms have resulted in flooding in (insert location). Flooding can pose many health risks to residents and precautions should be taken, say public health officials.

Debris, sewage and animal waste can wash into yards, homes and businesses as a result of flooding, well water may become contaminated and standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

“It’s not safe for people to remain in areas that are flooded,” said (insert name). “It’s important to take precautions to protect your family and yourself.”

Flood waters are a breeding ground for viruses, mold, bacteria and other microorganisms that can stimulate allergic reactions and cause disease.

Flooded wells can also pose health risks. If your private well was flooded during the recent rains or could be at risk of flooding, the well water could be in danger of contamination from pollutants carried in the floodwaters.

Bacteria, chemicals and other contaminants contained in floodwaters can enter the top of a well, seep down its casing or migrate underground via a neighbor’s flooded out well. Such contamination can make your water unsafe for consumption (i.e., drinking, food preparation or brushing teeth). Residents should suspect contamination if a well casing becomes flooded; if they notice taste, color or sediment changes in the water; or, if your well is shallow-cased and is near areas that have been flooded.

Standing water can also be a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which can carry illnesses such as West Nile virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). People can become sick with these illnesses after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

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Public health officials recommend the following precautions:

- If your home or business is flooded, you need to evacuate the area until the waters recede.
- If you suspect your well water is contaminated, stop drinking it immediately or using it for cooking and preparing food. Switch to bottled water or another safe water supply such as a neighbor's well you know is safe. If you cannot find a convenient source of safe water, boil the water for two minutes at a rolling boil before using it.
- If a well is suspected to be contaminated the well and entire plumbing system should be disinfected. This procedure is best done by a licensed well driller or pump installer with the expertise and equipment; however, well owners may disinfect the well and plumbing system themselves. Instructions on disinfecting a well can be found ([insert where to find instructions](#)).
- Residents are encouraged to have their well treated before testing the water for safety.
- Prevent well contamination during future flooding by having your well casing pipe raised to at least two feet about the regional flood elevation. Remember to test your well water at least once a year for bacterial contamination, and periodically for other contaminants, based on the land uses in your area.
- Finally, eliminate standing water by pouring out stagnant water in birdbaths, pet dishes, old tires and any other receptacle in which mosquitoes might breed. This will greatly reduce mosquito populations.

For more information about any of these precautions, please call ([insert contact information](#)).