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Contact: Kathy Moore, Environmental Services Administrator, 406-457-8926
Gayle Shirley, Communications Manager, 406-457-8908

Health Officials: Assume Flooded Wells Are Contaminated

In the wake of recent flooding, Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH) recommended that private well users assume their water is unfit to drink if flood waters reached the wellhead.

“If your well was flooded, don’t drink the water. It could be contaminated,” said Kathy Moore, administrator of the LCPH Environmental Services Division. “Don’t use it for cooking, brushing your teeth, or making baby formula or coffee.”

Instead, Moore said, use bottled water or water that’s been disinfected by boiling. To kill bacteria and other organisms, she said to bring water to a rolling boil and allow it to bubble for one full minute.

To find out whether your well water is safe to drink, Moore recommended getting it tested. In Helena, these laboratories are available:
- Alpine Analytical, 449-6282
- Energy Laboratories, 442-0711
- State of Montana Environmental Laboratory, 444-2642

If a lab test shows that the water is contaminated, you can get instructions for how to disinfect it from Public Health Nurse Sarah Howe-Cobb, at the Augusta Senior Center. Or use the disinfection method outlined in this fact sheet: www.lccountymt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/Health/EOC_Documents/well_fact_sheet.pdf

If you experience symptoms of illness, contact your doctor.

For more information on flood clean-up and safety, call the health department’s Environmental Services Division at 447-8351. You can also find more information on flood recovery at www.LewisAndClarkHealth.org