



TO: All Interested Parties, Environmental Health

FROM: Randall Yun, Land Use Program Manager 

DATE: January 20, 2023

RE: Private Well Information and Requirements following a Fire – Well Safety and Testing Guidance Policy (Policy # 2023 LU - 0 01)

NOTE: It is possible that creeks and rivers flowing from the fire affected areas may have elevated levels of heavy metals, including: Aluminum, Antimony, Arsenic, Cadmium, Selenium, Lead as well as Poly Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH's). Property owners who have private wells and live near creeks or rivers should consider testing for the presence of these heavy metals and PAH's in their well water. Residents in these areas should drink bottled water until well water is tested and confirmed free of contamination.

Guidance in Determining the Safety of Your Private Well:

#### **New Building Permit:**

If the casing or plumbing around the well was damaged by the fire, or if you lost pressure, testing for Total and Fecal Coliform, shall be completed by a qualified professional such as a licensed and trained well service provider, Registered Environmental Health Specialist who has been trained in water sampling and well construction, or a Certified Drinking Water Operator or their designated Courier who is currently employed with a company that provides certified drinking water operator services. Water shall be sampled at the wellhead, if possible, and delivered to the laboratory under a chain of custody. Findings are to be submitted with the well inspection report when applying for a residential Building Permit. The well report and the septic evaluation report will be part of the Building Permit review process.

- Contact a qualified professional, as described above to inspect the well head. Submit to Nevada County Department of Environmental Health (NCDEH) a signed and dated report, using the provided template, noting the condition of the wellhead including but not limited to: the presence of cracks or other damage, missing caps or screens, a diagram showing the location of the well and other observations such as flooded areas, animal enclosures (within 100 feet excluding pasturage), rodent activity and hazardous materials near the wellhead. <https://www.nevadacountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/33976/Raw-Water-Well-Inspection-Form?bidId=>
- If the casing or plumbing around the well was damaged by the fire or if you lost pressure, at a minimum, the water must be tested for bacteriological quality (i.e. Total and Fecal Coliform bacteria). Any damage to the well head, water distribution system, pressure tank, water storage tank or electrical system will need to be repaired or replaced to ensure that safe drinking water is supplied to the dwelling. Water may need to be tested for nitrates and other local contaminants of concern using a certified laboratory. If damaged piping is plastic (PVC or HDPE), it is recommended to test the water for VOCs. BTEX testing is commonly available, relatively inexpensive, and can suggest the need for additional VOC testing. Testing shall be collected from a location as close to the well as possible. Testing is to be conducted by qualified professional as described above. Water shall be sampled at the wellhead, if possible, and delivered to the laboratory under a chain of custody to a state-accredited laboratory.

- If there are any contaminants detected, a qualified professional, as described above, will need to complete needed repairs and/or disinfection. Testing will need to be conducted following the repairs and/or disinfection to demonstrate that the water supply meets potability standards as set forth in the California Safe Drinking Water Act

## **Water Testing Laboratories**

Drinking water testing shall be performed at an ELAP accredited laboratory. The CA Water Board has a website and mapping tool to find accredited labs. Please contact an ELAP accredited laboratory for sample collection bottles and sampling instructions.

<https://waterboards.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bd0bd8b42b1944058244337bd2a4ebfa>

### **Please be Advised:**

Well water must be sampled correctly in order to get accurate results. Special care must be taken to assure that bacteria are not introduced into the sample when it is taken. Environmental Health requires using a professional as described to obtain samples for Building Permits.

**To obtain permits for new or replacement well construction, contact Nevada County Environmental Health: (530) 265-1222 option #3**

### Helpful Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/water/private-wells/after-a-wildfire.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wellsdisinfect.html>