

Facts on Private Wells Affected by an Earthquake
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
April 18, 2008

Safe Well Water After an Earthquake

- ❑ Because an earthquake can cause shifts in the earth, groundwater used for drinking and the private wells that access it can be affected.
- ❑ Well water can become cloudy or take on a different color, smell and feel. The water can also become contaminated with dirt, minerals and other solids, as well as bacteria.
- ❑ Contaminated water can cause many illnesses.
- ❑ Do not use water that has a dark color, an odor or contains floating material.
- ❑ If you have a private well for drinking water and you or others living near you felt the April 18, 2008 earthquake, you should check your well water system for damage or changes in your drinking water.
- ❑ If your well system is damaged or your well water changes, it is recommended that you stop drinking it until the water clears, and you have had it tested for bacterial contamination, to help prevent water-borne illness.
- ❑ Until your water supply is deemed safe, purchase bottled water or you can purify your well water for drinking and cooking purposes. Instructions for purifying drinking water are provided below.

Household Water Usage in the Event of Possible Well Contamination

- ❑ Use only bottled or purified water for drinking, diluting fruit juices, all other food preparation and for toothbrushing.
- ❑ Dispose of ice cubes and do not use ice from a household automatic icemaker until the supply is determined safe.
- ❑ Disinfect dishes and other food contact surfaces by immersion for at least one minute in water that contains one teaspoon of unscented household bleach per gallon of water.
- ❑ Water used for bathing does not generally need to be boiled; however, close supervision of children is necessary to make sure that it is not ingested.
- ❑ Do not depend on water treatment devices to adequately purify contaminated water.

Steps for Purifying Drinking Water by Boiling or by the Addition of Chlorine Bleach

- ❑ Water may be purified by either boiling or by the addition of unscented chlorine bleach. Prior to boiling or adding bleach, strain water through cheesecloth, coffee filter or other clean, porous material to remove as many solid particles and dirt as possible.
- ❑ To purify water by boiling, bring water to a rolling boil and keep it boiling for 3-5 minutes. Pour water into disinfected drinking container (instructions for disinfecting containers provided below).
- ❑ To purify water using chlorine bleach, add 16 drops of pure, unscented household bleach to a gallon of water. Let stand for 30 minutes. If water is still cloudy after 30 minutes, you may add an additional 16 drops of chlorine to the gallon size container. Let the water stand an additional 30 minutes. **Do not use more than the recommended amount of bleach. Excessive amounts can be poisonous.**
- ❑ Refrigerate water purified via the above methods until use. Store for up to six months.

Disinfecting Drinking Water Containers

- ❑ Add one tablespoon of liquid, unscented, chlorine bleach to a gallon of water into the container.
- ❑ Let solution stand for 10 minutes, then pour out. Rinse the container with purified water.
- ❑ Fill container again with purified water, then cap the container for later use.
- ❑ You may also boil glass bottles or jars to disinfect them. In a large pan, submerge the bottle or jar in water. Bring to a rolling boil for 10 minutes.
- ❑ Fill the jars with purified water and cap the container for later use.