

## EXTREME WEATHER

# Preparing Wells and Septic Systems for a Flood

### WELLS

- Make sure the well has a tight fitting waterproof cap.
- Wrap the cap and well casing with durable sheet plastic and duct tape, then place sand bags around the wells.
- Ensure that backflow prevention valves are in place.
- Turn the electricity off to your well pump just prior to the flood. Do not turn the electricity back on until the flood waters recede.
- Make sure the surface seal outside the casing is in good shape.
- Ensure that the land surrounding the well is sloped away.
- If the well is not used during the flood, plug the vent holes. Remember to unplug the vent holes after threat of flood is passed.



### Plan ahead

- If flood waters inundate your well head, you will need to test the water to make sure it's safe **even if** you have followed the pre-flood recommendations. Find out in advance how and where you can get a well water test after the flood waters recede.
- Buy or fill sanitized containers with water. Store them where they won't be flooded, so you have some safe drinking water until your well can be put back in service.

**SEPTIC SYSTEMS →**

*Sources: Barb Liukkonen and Nick Haig, University of Minnesota Extension; Centers for Disease Control; Minnesota Pollution Control Agency*

## SEPTIC SYSTEMS

### Well in advance of any flooding

If you are in a location defined as a floodplain, there are a few things that can be done well in advance of any flooding. These include:

- Maintain a healthy system. A well-maintained septic system is better able to withstand the stresses of flooding. Helpful operation and maintenance information can be found at [septic.umn.edu/owners](http://septic.umn.edu/owners).
- Ensure all access points to the system (maintenance holes and inspection ports) are properly covered to prevent the flow of flood waters into the system.
- Be sure your system was designed and installed and is operated according to Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080.2270, which provides specifications for systems that are likely to withstand flooding during their lifespan, especially:
  - Install a backflow preventer (check valve) on the building sewer so sewage cannot back up into your home during a flooding event.
  - Ensure your tanks have been installed in a manner that protects them against flotation from buoyant (upward) forces on the tank in saturated soil.

### In preparation for imminent flooding

- If your septic system requires electricity,
  - Turn off the pump and alarms at the circuit box before the area floods. **Discontinue use of the system once the power supply has been shut off.**
  - Waterproof all electrical connections to avoid electrical shock or damage to wiring, pumps, and the electrical system.
- All system owners should make plans for severely limiting water use during and after the actual flooding event. Remember, well water may be contaminated and the soil treatment area may not accept water until the area dries. Normal water use should not continue until the area is unsaturated and a SSTS professional has visited the system to identify and repair any problems.
- A tank can be pumped to reduce the amount of sewage that could back-up into the home. This is not necessary if a backflow preventer has been installed. Tanks in flood prone areas should be anchored to prevent buoyant forces from pushing the tank above the ground. **This is a much larger concern if the tank has been recently pumped.**

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[www.extension.umn.edu/flood](http://www.extension.umn.edu/flood)

