



Yvette Salinas, Health Administrator

Water Safety for Consumers Returning Home After a Hurricane and/or Flooding

After a hurricane and/or flooding, people need to assess all water supply and equipment to decide if the water is safe to drink. Hurricanes, especially if accompanied by a tidal surge or flooding, can contaminate the public water supply. Water in the hurricane-affected area may not be safe to drink. Local announcements should provide updated information on the safety of the water supply.

Area Health Departments will determine whether the tap water is potable, i.e., can be used for drinking. If the water is not potable or is questionable and bottled water is not available, then follow these directions to purify it:

1. Use **bottled water** that has not been exposed to flood waters if it is available.
2. If you don't have bottled water, you should **boil water** to make it safe. Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be present. If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle, and draw off the clear water for boiling. Boil the water for **one minute**, let it cool, and store it in clean containers with covers.
3. If you can't boil water, you can **disinfect it using household bleach**. Bleach will kill some, but not all, types of disease-causing organisms that may be in the water. If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle, and draw off the clear water for disinfection. Add **1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops)** of regular, unscented, liquid household bleach **for each gallon of water**, stir it well and let it stand for 30 minutes before you use it. Store disinfected water in clean containers with covers.
4. If you have a well that has been flooded, the water should be tested and disinfected after flood waters recede. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact your local or state health department or agriculture extension agent for specific advice.

For additional information please contact Cameron County Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Response Program at (956) 247-3685 or e-mail: Health@co.cameron.tx.us.

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsdisas5.html>