

# **BUTTE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY**

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## **DISINFECTION PROCEDURE FOR PRIVATE WATER SUPPLIES**

### **COLIFORM BACTERIA**

Coliform bacteria are indicators of possible contamination of a water supply. The coliforms may originate from human, animal or soil sources. If coliform bacteria are present, drinking or showering in the contaminated water may or may not necessarily result in illness.

In private water wells common causes for coliform bacteria contamination include improper well surface seal and well maintenance without disinfection. Proper sealing of the well and disinfection(s) should be performed to ensure a safe water supply and to verify that there are no other sources of contamination that need investigation.

### **WELL CHLORINATION**

1. First check that the well is tightly sealed. If the well is not sealed, take measures to have it sealed properly but allow for chlorine to be added now, if needed, and in the future. This prevents the entrance of any surface contamination, either solid or liquid, to the water supply. Vents should be screened with their openings pointed downward and above flood levels.
2. If applicable, notify tenants **in advance** of the chlorination.
3. Pour 2 gallons of unscented, liquid household chlorine bleach into the well casing (not the water pipe).
4. Open every water outlet (both indoor and outdoor) until the smell of chlorine is evident. Close the outlets and allow to stand for 12 hours or overnight.  
**CAUTION: DO NOT DRINK OR BATHE IN THIS STRONGLY CHLORINATED WATER!!!**
5. Starting with the outside faucets first, open each water outlet and flush until the chlorine is gone. This takes about 4 to 12 hours of steady running, but could take days. **CAUTION: STRONG CHLORINATED WATER MAY DAMAGE PLANTS!!!** Monitor your well pump during flushing to prevent potential damage.

Use a swimming pool chlorine test and follow kit test instructions. Be sure NO chlorine remains in the water.

**Systems not routinely connected to a chlorination device should have NO CHLORINE in the water when it is tested for bacteria. Chlorine will invalidate the test, giving a false negative.**

6. After chlorination, another sample should be taken at least 5 days after the water is free of chlorine using Sutter County Public Health Laboratory bottles.

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