What To Do Before, During and After Floods

What to do before it floods

Flooding especially after monsoons and spring runoff, is common drinking water concern in the southwest. While floods cannot be avoided, there are some steps all well owners should do to reduce the impacts of upcoming flooding.

Proactive Steps

1. Private well owners should make sure that their well has a cap or sanitary seal.
2. Have the well water tested annually for bacteria, nitrates, pH and conductivity.
3. Keep records of well maintenance
4. Make sure that the ground is sloped away from the well so that surface water flows away instead of towards the well head.
5. Avoid mixing, using or storing pesticides, fertilizers, degreasers, fuels or any other pollutant near the well.
6. Ensure that all animal waste piles are situated on the property where water will not flow from the pile towards the well head.
7. Make sure that well casing extends at least 18 inches above land surface (NMAC 19.27.4)
8. If you have a well pit, consider upgrading your system (see factsheet on well pits).

Preparing when flooding is likely

- If water is likely to flow towards the well head, sand bags should be used to divert the flowing water away from the well head.
- Consider protecting the area over the water line between the well and the house with sand bags, as a recent or improperly backfilled trench may provide a flow path for the flood water to the well casing.
- All capped wells are vented to allow proper functioning of the pump. Consider wrapping this vent with a tarp and duct tape or some other similar removable "seal" to keep water from flowing through the vent.
- Well heads in pits are difficult to protect. The pit should be protected using plywood, sheet plastic/tarps, and sand bags.
- When flooding is imminent and/or evacuations are likely to occur, prepare for evacuation by turning off all utilities at the main power switch https://nmtracking.org/en/eh_alerts/floods/

Typical Construction of Private Domestic Wells

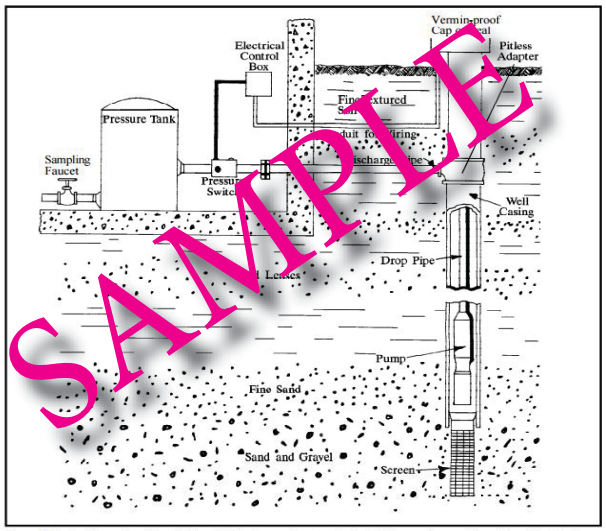

Figure 2: Typical domestic well installation with discharge pipe extending into the home. *Source: Adapted from Planning Your Well: Guidelines for Safe, Dependable Drinking Water, University of Illinois-Champaign Cooperative Extension Service, December 1988.* F1.3

What to do after it floods

- Stay away from the well pump while flooded to avoid electric shock.
- Do not drink or wash from the flooded well to avoid becoming sick.
- Get assistance from a well or pump contractor to clean and disinfect your well before turning on the pump.
- After the pump is turned back on, pump the well until the water runs clear to rid the well of flood water.
- Get the water tested for bacteria before resuming use for drinking water even if the well did not get overtopped.
- IMPORTANT: If any part of the electrical system or control box has been submerged, avoid risk of electrocution and do not attempt to restart the well by yourself, call a professional well service company.

Learn more at:

https://nmtracking.org/epht-view/environment/water/private_wells/Resources.html