



Ravalli County Environmental Health
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After the fire ...

Wells

Visually inspect your well and all other pipes and appurtenances which bring water to your home. Things to look for:

- Damage to electrical wires and connectors which supply power to your well.
- Damage to the sanitary seal and well cap.
- Damage to above-ground PVC pipes used to bring water into your home.
- Damage to well houses and equipment such as chlorinators, filters and electronic controls.
- Damage to pressure tanks which could have been damaged by heat.
- Damage to storage tanks, vents and overflow pipes.
- If any damage is found, you should contact the appropriate licensed contractor or well driller to repair the damage.

If you notice your water tastes or smells earthy, smoky or burnt, you should thoroughly flush your lines by opening all the taps and letting them run for 10 minutes or so.

Get your water tested for bacterial contamination. Sample bottles and testing procedures are available at the Ravalli County Environmental Health Department. The Red Cross can help with the cost of testing.

Until you've confirmed that your water is safe to drink, i.e., absence of Coliform bacteria, you should drink water from an approved source or boil your drinking water for more than one minute. In the meantime, you can use your water for showering or flushing toilets. Take care to avoid swallowing water from showers or baths. Do not wash dishes or cooking utensils with untested water. The water is, however, considered safe for animals.

Disinfecting the well while waiting for a sample:

1. Pour 1.5 cups of bleach into the well at the well cap.
2. Open taps at the farthest end of the system until you smell chlorine.
3. Let well stand 24 hours without pumping.
4. Open taps and flush lines until a chlorine odor is no longer detectable.

Septic system

Before rebuilding a home and reconnecting to an existing septic system, the Ravalli County Environmental Health Department must inspect the system and connection to make sure the wastewater treatment system is functioning properly. This will require a \$100 Alteration permit, in which a sanitarian will list what needs to be done. The work must be done by a certified septic installer, and the permit must be obtained prior to beginning construction.

If, for instance, the plastic riser over the septic tank has been burned or otherwise damaged, it must be replaced since it poses a hazard. This replacement may be done without a permit and does not have to be done by a certified septic installer.

If you are unsure of the location of your septic system, contact RCEH to see if they have a permit and map of the system.

RV Camping

It is permissible to live in a recreational vehicle on a temporary basis while rebuilding your home, but you must connect, with a permit from RCEH, to the wastewater treatment system which served the home. As with any septic permit, RCEH must make sure the system is working properly.

If your septic system has been damaged to the point that it must be repaired or replaced (as determined by a sanitarian at RCEH), repairs or replacement must occur before connecting an RV to the system. If you wish to live in the RV before repairing or replacing the septic system, you will need a written agreement with RCEH delineating how wastewater from the RV will be properly disposed of.