

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Testing your well water after a wildfire

#### **Q: Is it safe to use my water if I boil it first?**

If your home was in the immediate area of fire and firefighting activities, it is recommended that you use an alternate source for drinking, cooking and brushing your teeth until you have confirmed that your water is safe to drink. Boiling will not remove chemical contaminants from your water.

#### **Q: How do I know the type of testing I should undertake?**

If your property was not impacted by fire or fire-fighting activities, it's recommended that you follow routine well water testing as recommended by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The recommendation includes bacteria sampling every 6 months and general chemistry and metals every two years. You can learn more about the recommendations online:

<https://novascotia.ca/well-water-testing/>

For peace of mind, Annapolis County is providing free bacteria water testing kits.

**Annapolis County is providing free water testing kits for returned evacuees of the communities of Highway 10, Trout and Zwicker Lakes.**

- **One kit per civic household will be provided.**
- **Pick up your kit on Tuesday, September 16th, 4–7 pm, at the Nictaux Fire Hall (9349 Hwy 10).**
- **After collecting your water sample, drop it off at the Nictaux Fire Hall on:**
  - **Tuesday, September 23, 7:30–9:00 am**
  - **Tuesday, September 30, 7:30–9:00 am**

**The deadline for evacuee collection and test services is September 30, 2025.**

**Chemical testing is being offered for evacuees whose homes have been directly effected by the wildfire. This is a voluntary service and evacuees will be contacted for follow up.**

#### **Q: Is it necessary to flush and disinfect my water supply before testing?**

You should always flush your water lines prior to collecting a sample to remove any stagnant water. If your water supply was damaged, you should contract a qualified professional to make the necessary repairs, then disinfect your water supply prior to testing. Its recommended you wait 5 days after disinfecting your well before you collect your water samples to ensure the chlorine has fully flushed from the system as well as to give the disinfectant time to kill any bacteria, if present.

## **Q: Is the process for flushing, disinfecting and testing different for a dug well versus a drilled well?**

The process for flushing, disinfecting and testing is the same for both dug and drilled wells. If you have a home water treatment system, you should bypass your unit during flushing of chlorinated water. If you are unsure how to do this, contact your home treatment supplier.

Information on how to disinfect your well is available here: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/docs/DisinfectWaterWell.pdf>

For information on how to collect your water sample, follow the instructions provided by the laboratory.

Environment and Climate Change also has instructions for collecting samples on their website for bacteria samples and general chemistry and metals.

To collect a sample for bacteria, follow the steps outlined here: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/docs/MicrobiologicalSamplingProcedure.pdf>

To collect a sample for general chemistry and metals, follow the steps outlined here: [https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/sample\\_chemical.asp](https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/sample_chemical.asp)

## **Q: Will disinfecting damage my well if I have high iron content in our water?**

Well disinfection is a common treatment method which involves flushing the water system with large amounts of bleach. Bleach disinfection can cause discoloration of the water as iron reacts with bleach. This discoloration is expected to be temporary and should clear up as you flush your well following disinfection. If water remains discoloured after two or three days of normal use, you may need to investigate the issue(s) that may be causing the problem. A certified well installer can help you with that.

## **Q: Is bleach the only thing that can be used to disinfect a well?**

Health Canada recommends the use of bleach to disinfect a well. See Health Canada fact sheet here: <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/healthy-living/water-talk-information-private-well-owners/we-protect-eng.pdf>

### **Q: Who is eligible for free water testing?**

Bacteria testing is available for returned evacuees until September 30, 2025. Extensive testing is available for evacuees located at the West Dalhousie Road, Thorne Road and Spectacle Lake Road.

### **Q: I was not evacuated, but I am still concerned about my water. Can I still test my water?**

Free testing is only available for the people who were evacuated due to the wildfires and have their own water supply. It is recommended that anyone with their own water supply test their water for bacteria every 6 months and chemical parameters every two years. A list of drinking water testing labs is available here: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/waterlabs.asp>

### **Q: Where can I pick up a water testing kit?**

Annapolis County is providing free water testing kits for returned evacuees of the communities of Highway 10, Trout and Zwicker Lakes.

- One kit per civic household will be provided.
- Pick up your kit on Tuesday, September 16th, 4–7 pm, at the Nictaux Fire Hall (9349 Hwy 10).
- After collecting your water sample, drop it off at the Nictaux Fire Hall on:
  - Tuesday, September 23, 7:30–9:00 am
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### **Q: Can I return my samples directly to the lab?**

Annapolis County have scheduled drop off dates for your convenience. Well testing after Sept. 30 will be the cost and responsibility of resident.

### **Q: I already returned home and tested my well water. Can I be reimbursed for this cost?**

Yes. If the test was done after the first day of re-entry (After Sept. 3) and it was a bacterial test only. A copy of the lab invoice will have to be submitted to the Municipality of the County of Annapolis and a requisition for payment will be issued to the property owner.

**Q: How long will it take to get my test results back?**

Lab results take 5-7 days. You will be notified depending on how you signed up to receive notification.

**Q: I received my water testing results. What do they mean?**

The lab will send you the results of your water test. If you need help understanding them, you can refer to ECC's Drinking Water Interpretation Tool available online for common water quality contaminants: <https://novascotia.ca/nse/dwit/>

If you do not have computer access or need assistance understanding your test please reach out to our Navigator Coordinator. The Navigator Program operates daily, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., at the Bridgetown Fire Hall (31 Bay Rd.). Evacuees can contact the program by phone at (902) 955-9858 or email at [navigator@annapoliscounty.ca](mailto:navigator@annapoliscounty.ca).