Well Water Safety and Testing after a Wildfire

Recommendations from the *National Water Systems Council* recommends the following be done after a wildfire.

In the case of a wildfire, a well inspection should be performed. Disinfection of the well system may be needed, but should follow the inspection to ensure there is no damage. It is important to note that water quality will change, so treatment is not recommended at this time. Extensive testing should not be performed right away either. The recommendation is for a simple *bacteria test and then follow-up with extensive testing in 30 days*.

Use an alternative source of water for drinking and cooking in the meantime. You can use your water for showering and flushing toilets. Take care to avoid swallowing water from showers or baths. Do not use system water for washing dishes or cleaning until it has been disinfected or the test returns clean for bacteria. The water is safe for your animals.

You may have some concerns about fire-related impacts to your well. You should perform a visual inspection of your well and all other pipes and appurtances that work together to bring water into your household. The things you should be looking for include:

- Damage to electrical wires and connectors which supply power to your well,
- Damage to above ground PVC pipes used with the well to supply water,
- Damage to well houses and seals on the well, and equipment such as chlorinators, filters etc.,,
- Damage to pressure tanks which could have been caused by excessive exposure to heat,
- Damage to storage tanks, vents and overflow pipes.

If any damage is found, you should contact the appropriate licensed contractor to repair the damage.

For extensive water testing after the 30 days wait period, we recommend bacteria, nitrate, sodium, pH, hardness, iron, manganese, turbidity, silica, sulfates, potassium, metals, and VOCs.

How can I disinfect my well and pipes while waiting for sample results?

Source: Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

Pour 1 gallon of 5% bleach into well for each ten gallons of water, wait 30 minutes.
Open taps at the farthest end of the system and any dead ends until chlorine is smelled.
Close taps.
Let well stand 24 hours without being used.
After 24 hours, open the taps and flush lines until a chlorine odor is no longer detectible. NOTE: Be sure to pump well water into a waste receptacle – do not pump into septic system!

Testing labs listed by the DEQ can be found at this link http://deq.wyoming.gov/wqd/know-your-well/resources/find-a-laboratory/

For more information on your drinking water The following sites provide up-to-date information on efforts to protect public water supplies and steps you can take as a private well owner:

Uinta County Conservation District 204 E. Sage, Lyman, WY 82937 307-787-3070
www.uintacountycd.com
Water of Life can provide bacterial sampling (e-coli) at their office $25.00 ***softandpure@gmail.com***
120 Yellow Creek Road, Evanston, WY 82930 307-787-6800 (c)307-780-8542
Sweetwater County Environmental Health Division 307-872-3930 Samples taken M-T-W 8am-3pm
333 Broadway, Suite 010 Rock Springs, WY 82901 cost is $35.00 https://www.sweet.wy.us/index.aspx?NID=334
Chemtech/Ford Laboratories, 9632 South, 500West, Sandy UT 84070 801-262-7299
Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Laramie, WY http://wyagric.state.wy.us/divisions/asl/fees#package
Home*A*Syst Program www.uwex.edu/homeasyst
Water Quality Association www.wqa.org
The Groundwater Foundation www.groundwater.org
American Water Works Association www.awwa.org