



News Release

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HELP MAY BE AVAILABLE FOR VERMONTERS WITH CONTAMINATED WELLS

BURLINGTON, Vt. – State and federal officials are reminding Vermonters whose wells may have been contaminated by flooding after Tropical Storm Irene to apply for assistance to repair or replace the well.

Homeowners whose wells or septic systems were damaged or flooded may receive funds to perform required well repairs, pump their septic tank, or even replace them if the damage is permanent, according to Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials.

“The repair or replacement of contaminated water wells is covered by FEMA assistance,” said James N. Russo, FEMA’s Federal Coordinating Officer. “This can include site work or grading to keep existing wells from being contaminated by standing water, and sometimes bringing the well up to code by extending the casing above grade.”

Recovery officials urged residents to have their water system inspected and tested if any of the following conditions exist:

- The well was flooded;
- The well was in close proximity to a flooded area;
- There has been a change in water quality such as the odor or taste.

“Residents can contact their Vermont Health Department district office or town health officer for a free test kit and disinfection instructions,” said Vermont Emergency Management Director Mike O’Neil. “Water samples must be submitted to the Health Department Laboratory according to the instructions in the kit, and must be clearly marked ‘contaminated by flooding.’”

If tests determine the well was contaminated and homeowners are unable to disinfect the well with standard bleach treatment, they should report the results to FEMA and request help with repair or replacement of the well.

Several steps are required to meet eligibility requirements.

- The FEMA inspection must indicate that the well was contaminated as a result of the disaster.

- If the initial inspection does not support the applicant's claim for a particular line item, or the claim is denied, the applicant may request an appeal inspection and may be required to provide itemized receipts.

Renters who have septic system problems that forced them to vacate their homes can apply for FEMA rental assistance which can provide renters with safe, secure, temporary housing until the landlord completes septic system repairs.

For more information about drinking water safety and how to test your well, visit:
www.healthvermont.gov

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585; or call 800-621-3362 if using 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS).

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

SBA disaster loan information and application forms may be obtained by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for people with speech or hearing disabilities) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET; Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET or by sending an e-mail to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Applications can also be downloaded from www.sba.gov or completed on-line at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>.

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