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September 5, 2012

Health Department Advises Residents Using Private Wells in Hurricane-Affected Areas of Risks, Testing Options

Baton Rouge - The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals advises Louisiana residents in the parishes affected by Hurricane Isaac who use private wells for their drinking water systems to take water safety precautions if their wells flooded during the storm.

DHH is responsible for regularly testing public drinking water systems, but does not have oversight of private well systems. The well owners are responsible for testing and monitoring their water. If a homeowner's water well was flooded during Hurricane Isaac, the well owner should disinfect the well using a chlorine bleach solution following recommended Environmental Protection Agency guidelines. The owner should then flush the well.

If well owners wish to have their water tested for contamination, there are private laboratories throughout the state that are certified to test drinking water samples and will perform this service for a fee. DHH has a list of State-certified drinking water laboratories available online at www.dhh.louisiana.gov. Owners should wait to submit water samples for testing until they have disinfected and flushed the well.

If the lab tests are positive for contaminants, the well owner will be advised not to consume the water (e.g. drinking, brushing teeth, cooking with it) until the water has been boiled or chemically disinfected.

Residents who use private wells can have health department staff conduct tests for \$40. To do this, the well owner should collect a water sample from the well after it has been disinfected and flushed, and must keep the water sample refrigerated or on ice until submitted. Samples need to be delivered within 20 hours of collection. Well owners can bring their water samples to the nearest parish health unit, and can contact the

health unit for information about the designated collection days at that location. DHH will then test the water samples through its State Office of Public Health Laboratory, and provide results to the well owner in about two days.

For more information on private well water testing, see DHH's brochure on this process or contact DHH's Safe Drinking Water Program at 225-342-7499.

To contact your parish sanitarian about submitting well samples to your local health unit, call 225-342-7643, or visit DHH's list of parish health units throughout the State to find the contact information for your local health unit.

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