Wells and Wastewater After a Wildland Fire

Your well or septic system could be adversely affected by fire, power outages, equipment failure, or contamination of water supplies.

Private Wells/Water Systems

- Perform a visual inspection of your well and other components which are part of your water supply system, including:
  - Damage to electrical wires and connectors which supply power to your well
  - Damage to above ground PVC pipes used with the well to bring water to your home
  - Damage to well houses and special equipment (chlorinators, filters, electronic controls)
  - Damage to pressure tanks which could have been caused by exposure to excessive heat
  - Damage to storage tanks, vents and over-flow pipes
- If you find damage to your well or water system, contact an appropriate contractor to repair the damage
- If your water tastes or smells earthy, smoky or burnt, you may need to thoroughly flush your water lines.
- If your system has been damaged or if you are in doubt about the safety of your water, you may want to have your water tested. Contact your local public health department or a certified lab regarding testing.
- Each person in a household will need at least one gallon of water per day for drinking, cooking and general hygiene. If you suspect that your water supply may have been compromised during the fire, bring plenty of bottled water with you when returning to your home.
- If you do not have water that you know is safe, it is possible to purify the water for drinking purposes. Start with the cleanest water you can find and treat it by one of the following methods:
  - Chemical Disinfection:
    Treat the water with household strength liquid chlorine bleach (do not use scented bleach products). Add bleach according to the table below, stir or shake; allow water to stand for 30 minutes before drinking.

Amount of Water	Amount of bleach if water is clear	Amount of bleach if water is cloudy
1 gallon	1/8 tsp	¼ tsp
5 gallons	½ tsp	1 teaspoon

- Boiling:
  Boil the water for 10 minutes. Once the water has cooled, it can be consumed or stored in clean containers to use later.

- If you suspect that your well or water system has been contaminated, or if sampling indicates that bacterial contaminants are present, disinfection of your well is recommended. Contact your local health department for instructions on well disinfection.

Wastewater Systems

- If you are connected to an onsite wastewater treatment system (septic system), inspect your system for damage:
  - Damage to plastic piping above ground that may have been damaged by heat
  - Raised systems scorched or damaged by fire
  - Damage to piping where pipes enter the home/structure

- If your wastewater disposal system has been damaged, or if your system is backing up or malfunctioning, discontinue use and contact your local health department for guidance and instruction on repair and restoration of the system.

For additional information on private wells and onsite wastewater disposal systems, contact the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment at 970 498-6775.