

## **Information for Owners/Operators of Small Drinking Water Systems in Times of Drought or Low Water Situations**

During times of prolonged drought, wells can be susceptible to contamination due to varying water levels. As water levels in the water table drop, some wells may draw contaminants from further away into your drinking water supply. In addition, soil may compact and pull away from well casings making them vulnerable to runoff when it does rain. In times of drought, operators of Small Drinking Water Systems may notice changes in their water supply including quality and quantity.

Although you may be sampling your well water as per your Small Drinking Water System directive, if you do not have a water treatment system you may wish to increase sampling during times of drought to ensure the bacteriological quality of the water has not changed. Should your sample results indicate poor bacteriological quality, reporting to the Health Unit is required. If signs of contamination are present, the common practice of disinfection may not be recommended as during drought conditions this process (which requires flushing) may result in your well running dry. Call the Health Unit to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this procedure.

As a business owner, a safe and sufficient supply of drinking water is required for you to continue to be in operation. It is therefore very important to have a back- up plan should your well begin to be affected by the drought and not be able to produce a sufficient supply of water.

It can take a considerable amount of time for wells to recover from persistent lack of precipitation. All well owners are encouraged to conserve water before wells start to be problematic, and to consider alternate safe sources of water available in the event that there is a shortage of water from the well.

### **Ways in which you can reduce your water usage are:**

- When thawing food consider using the refrigerator rather than running food under cold running water (food establishments)
  - Ensure dishwasher loads are full before running the dishwasher (food establishments)
  - Fix leaks, dripping faucets and running toilets
  - If you do not have low flush toilets, carefully placing a brick in the back toilet tank will displace water resulting in less water used during each flush
  - If you have laundry facilities on site ensure loads are full before you run the washing machine.
  - Don't water lawns, wash cars, driveways etc.
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Should your well stop providing water notify the Health Unit immediately. Do not pour surface water into your well as this can contaminate the water supply with bacteria, parasites and possibly chemical contaminants that can be difficult to remove. Removing your well cap to check water levels frequently, or lowering measuring devices into your well can lead to contamination and is not recommended.

For more information on what you can do to protect your well water supply and to check the status of drought conditions in your watershed please check the following links to our partner agencies:

- Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/drinking-water>
- Conservation Authorities: Cataraqui Conservation Authority: <http://crca.ca/>
- Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority: <http://mvc.on.ca/>
- Rideau Valley Conservation Authority: <http://www.rvca.ca/>
- South Nation Conservation Authority: <http://www.nation.on.ca/>



For more information, please call the  
Health ACTION Line at **1-800-660-5853**  
or visit our website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)