

Returning Home After a Wildfire Using Water Safely

- After a wildfire, your home may be affected by smoke, soot and ash, chemicals, structural damage, and water damage.
- Not all of the information here may apply to your situation.
- Local authorities may give you more guidance specific to your situation.

Should I flush my water system before I use it when I return home after a wildfire?

- Yes. It's recommended that you flush your water system to get the old water out of your water lines.
 - o Old (stagnant) water is water that has been sitting in your water lines without moving or flowing for a long time.
- Flush your system even if there's a boil water advisory when you return home.
- Flush your system again once the boil water advisory has ended.

To flush your system:

- Turn on all cold water taps for at least 5 minutes before you use them.
- Turn on all hot water taps for at least 5 minutes before you use them, even if the water is not hot.
- Drain and refill water heaters that have been set below 45°C/110°F.
 - o Information is available at [How Do I Flush My Water Heater? \(alberta.ca\)](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/Flushing-Your-Water-Heater.aspx)
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/Flushing-Your-Water-Heater.aspx>

How can I use water safely during a boil water advisory?

- Follow local guidance with regards to drinking water advisories. If you are not sure, please call the local Health Centre.



What should I do with my private well or cistern?

- Look at and walk around your well or cistern. Look for damage.
- Your well or cistern may be damaged, and your water supply may be contaminated by harmful germs (bacteria) because of a loss of pressure. Germs can make you sick.
- Your water may need to be tested before using it.
- Contact the local Health Centre/Nursing Station for more advice.

You can also speak to an Environmental Public Health Officer for more information.

Contact:

Indigenous Services Canada

Environmental Public Health Services

First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Alberta Region

Edmonton Phone: (587) 337-3636

Calgary Phone: (587)337-7980

Source: Alberta Health Services

Adapted from: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/wildfire-restore-your-home.aspx>