

Septics Edition

Second Flush (MRA only), "tIssue" #4

Winter 2013

"Weathering" Heavy Rains, Floods & Power Outages

Wet and blustery wintertime weather can present threats to food and water supplies—and onsite septic systems. Wells and septic systems can be challenged by power outages, floods or super-saturated soils; extended power outages will also cause risks for your food supplies. Use these emergency tips to help keep your family, friends, and co-workers safe, and protect your home or business from public health threats related to bad weather.

Septic System Safety

Extended periods of rain, floodwaters, and power outages may impact many septic systems. When soils become saturated with water they aren't able to adequately treat and disperse sewage, so it may rise to the surface of the ground or back-up into your home. Many septic systems need electricity to power the pumps that run them; without electricity, the pumps don't operate.

Follow these tips to minimize the damage to and from septic systems during extended periods of rain, floods or power outages:

- Learn about the type, location and size of your septic system before an emergency by taking a Septics 101 class. If you take an in-person class you will be provided copies of your as-built diagram (also available online, see link below).
- If your drainfield is covered with standing water, stop or curtail your water use. Once standing water has receded, you can begin to use water sparingly. If the waters have receded and your system is backing sewage up into the house or discharging it to the ground surface, you should contact a licensed septic system designer and call us at 360-417-2506.
- If your septic system uses electricity and the power goes out, the pumps will not operate and you will have limited sewage storage (a couple of days). To avoid sewage backing up into your house, reduce water use until power is restored.
- Call a septic system O&M provider as soon as possible to report your situation (link below), and get advice.

Drinking Water Safety

If your wellhead has been covered by water, or if your drinking water is discolored or smells differently, don't assume it's safe to drink, wash with, or cook with. It could be contaminated by bacteria, viruses, and other contaminants. Before using it, purify it using one of the methods below. Note that none of these methods will remove chemicals or toxic contaminants like fertilizer or fuel.

- **Boiling water is the best and safest way to kill disease-causing bacteria, viruses, and other organisms.** Bring the water to a rapid, bubbling boil, and keep it there for at least one minute. Cool it, and store it in a clean, covered container until you use it.
- **Chemical disinfection** (such as chlorine) is another method to remove bacteria, viruses, and other organisms.
 - o If the water is clear, add about 10 drops (1/8th teaspoon) of 5-6% household liquid chlorine bleach to each gallon of water, mix thoroughly, and let it sit for at least 30 minutes before using it. Avoid using scented and "colorsafe" bleaches. Some bleach brands do not have the required 5-6% chlorine content—call the manufacturer to make sure.
 - o If the water is cloudy or filled with particles, first filter it through a cloth. Then add the dilute bleach (see recipe above), mix thoroughly, and let it sit for at least 60 minutes. If it's still cloudy or has visible particles in it, let it sit overnight to settle.
 - o There are also commercially available chemical treatment products that use ingredients such as iodine. Follow the manufacturer's instructions if you use these products.



Food Safety

Extended power outages may present safety hazards for refrigerated and frozen foods if they cannot be kept cold enough. When these types of foods are not kept cold or cooked thoroughly, they will grow harmful bacteria that will make people and pets sick. Throw food away if refrigerated/frozen food isn't cold to the touch, if it looks or smells bad or unusual, or if food has come into direct contact with floodwater. "When in doubt—throw it out!" To preserve food, keep freezer doors shut and use coolers packed with ice.



Flooded septic drainfield. Water use should be curtailed if you are experiencing flooding.

Photo: EPA

Article information courtesy Kitsap Public Health District

Clallam County Onsite Program Websites

- Onsite septic systems (OSS) in general: <http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite.html>
 O&M program including provider list: http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_om.html
 Find "as-builts" and other permit records: http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_asbuilt.html
 OSS educational page: http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_septic101.html
 Septics Edition newsletter (all issues): <http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/ehnewsletter1.html>



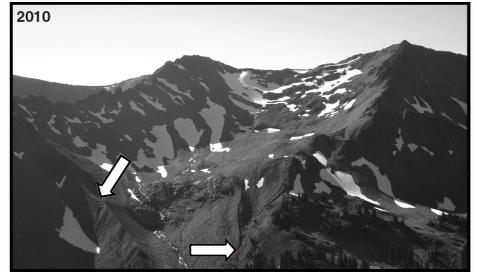
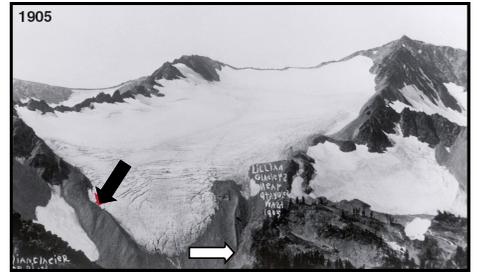
The Water Column

Change is Here

This year there is above-average snowpack in the Olympic Mountains—however, the general trend is that temperatures are increasing and snowfields and glaciers are wasting away. Less snowpack means less snowmelt for streamflow in late summer. This is one reason water managers recently tightened regulations in the Dungeness watershed area, requiring mitigation to offset the impact of new uses on streamflow and senior water rights. As of January 2nd, you must mitigate if you are using a private well in the area regulated under the state’s new rule, WAC 173-518.

To get a building permit, these property owners now need a mitigation certificate for indoor uses (bathing, cooking, cleaning, etc.). Those wishing to irrigate a new lawn or garden must mitigate for outdoor use as well, unless they have access to water from an irrigation ditch company or district. Mitigation Certificates associated with a building permit are available from the County Permit Center (Clallam County Courthouse), or directly from the **Dungeness Water Exchange, 206-675-1585, ext. 100**. Once a mitigation certificate is recorded for your parcel by the Clallam County Auditor it becomes a property right for the benefit of all subsequent owners.

Stay tuned to the following website for County updates: <http://www.clallam.net/Permits/WaterRule.html>



Lillian Glacier in the Olympic Mountains (upper Elwha) is indicative of shrinking glaciers and snowfields in the upper Dungeness watershed. Photo courtesy Olympic National Park: <http://www.nps.gov/olym/naturescience/glaciers.htm>

Clean Water Herald—Septics Edition Winter 2013

Clallam County Environmental Health Services
223 E. 4th Street, Suite 14
Port Angeles, WA 98362



The address used is the taxing address on record in the Clallam County Assessor’s Office for one or more properties that are (or are likely, according to land use information) utilizing an onsite septic system.

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The Clean Water Herald is a periodic newsletter supported by members of the Clean Water Work Group, to inform and promote good stewardship of our shared natural resources.

“**Septics Edition**” Volume 2 (Second Flush) is published by the friendly staff at Environmental Health Services, a division of the Clallam County Health & Human Services Department. Contact us at the courthouse, 360-417-2258, or visit www.clallam.net/envhealth

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under assistance agreement PC-00J32601 to Washington Department of Health. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the EPA, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

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Winter Septics Events

Septics 101
Online

A 30-minute video and quiz are available through the link below. When you’ve completed the course and quiz, print and save your Certificate of Completion.

Take **Septics 101 online** or register for in-person classes at http://www.clallam.net/HHS/EnvironmentalHealth/onsite_septic101.html (if you don’t have internet, register by leaving a message at 360-417-2529)

Septics 101
In-Person

None scheduled until Spring

Dungeness River Audubon Center; west end of Hendrickson Rd., Sequim

Septics 201
Depends on Funding

Also known as **Do-It-Yourself (DIY) inspection training**—not yet available. This class will train the homeowner how to perform a certified inspection of their septic system.