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NEWS RELEASE

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KCHD Detects E. Coli In Residential Well Exposed To Recent Eastern Kanawha County Floodwaters

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA – Kanawha-Charleston Health Department has detected E. coli in a residential water well that had been tainted during recent flash flooding in the eastern part of the Kanawha County.

A member of KCHD’s Environmental Health Division took samples from the well while out in flood-ravaged neighborhoods answering questions and gathering samples for tests on private and community wells, said KCHD Health Officer Dr. Steven Eshenaur.

“Fortunately, the majority of residents in the area are hooked into a public water supply,” Eshenaur said. “Unfortunately, not very many of the residents who get their water from private or community wells have taken us up on our offer to test their well water for free. I hope this message gets out to those residents, who clearly have so much going on in their lives right now. We really don’t want an emergency room visit for an E. coli infection to be one more ordeal they have to contend with right now.”

E. coli (*Escherichia coli*) bacteria normally live in the intestines of people and animals. Most *E. coli* are harmless and actually are an important part of a healthy human intestinal tract; however, some *E. coli* are pathogenic, meaning they can cause illness, either severe diarrhea or illness outside of the intestinal tract. The types of *E. coli* that can cause diarrhea can be transmitted through contaminated water or food. Those with these types of severe gastrointestinal symptoms should check with their healthcare provider, Eshenaur said.

If E. coli, which is common in floodwaters, taints a drinking water well, residents are advised not to drink it or use it for any cleaning purposes. The water must be boiled before use until the well is chlorinated first to make the drinking water safe. KCHD sanitarians recommend the following steps to make a well microbiologically safe:

To chlorinate a well, mix one gallon of liquid bleach (5¼ percent) with four gallons of water and pour the mixture into the well. Run water through all water lines inside and outside the house until you can smell a slight chlorine odor coming from the spigots. Don't use water again for 12 hours. After 12 hours, run water from each spigot until the chlorine odor disappears. Continue to use water as normal for five days. Call KCHD's Environmental Health Division at 304-348-8050 for repeat testing to confirm that the bacteria is gone.

If your well has been exposed to floodwaters - or you aren't sure and have concerns - contact KCHD to request testing of your well. Well water testing is free to any Kanawha County home or business affected by flooding.

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