



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

www.smchd.org

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDS INCLUDING FLOOD PROOF WELL CAPS IN HOME MAINTENANCE PLANS THIS FALL

LEONARDTOWN, MD (October 19, 2006) – St. Mary's County Health Department is working to educate residents in flood prone areas about the advantages of installing flood-proof well caps on their properties. During flooding or high tides, flood proof well caps seal out dangerous bacteria that can enter a well, making drinking water unsafe.

For many St. Mary's County residents, storm clean-up after Hurricane Isabel in 2003 and Tropical Storm Earnesto this past summer, included disinfecting their private well and having their water re-sampled by the health department to guarantee the potability of their water supply, according to Sanitarian, Heather Moritz, from the Environmental Health Services division at health department.

Business, as well as residential property owners, suffered costly and time consuming delays in getting back on their feet, as they waited to have their wells tested, disinfected, and then re-sampled to determine if their water was safe to drink. "On top of all the other concerns facing property owners after a storm, safe drinking water should not have to be a worry," notes Moritz. For a cost of about \$200, a new flood proof cap can safeguard people's families and businesses from unhealthy water, and eliminate the need to disinfect and resample their water after a major storm.

(more)

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The health department is strongly recommending that private well owners in low lying areas include replacing their well cap with one that is flood proof as part of their fall or spring home maintenance plans, well in advance of the next hurricane season. The well cap, available through Maryland licensed Master Well Drillers, is approved for safety by the Maryland Department of the Environment and can be installed by a well driller for a reasonable cost. Wells drilled after April 2006 are likely to have a flood proof cap. Homeowners should check with their well driller to verify the presence of the protective cap.

Flood proof caps also protect our county's aquifers from unhealthy contamination introduced by sources on the surface that seep into groundwater supplies. "Safe drinking water is the cornerstone of good public health. And in this situation, a very simple solution can make all the difference. Installing flood proof caps will protect one of our most vital natural resources, and make a healthy difference in the recovery period following a storm," said Dr. William B. Icenhower, the county's health officer.

Residents interested in learning if their property is in a flood prone area should visit the health department's Web site at www.smchd.org and click on the home page link to view the Storm Surge Map of St. Mary's County. To schedule an installation, contact a licensed well driller. For information about the advantages of installing a flood proof cap, call the St. Mary's County Environmental Health Services division at 301-475-4321.

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