



Preventing water tank contamination after a bushfire

7 February 2019

The most effective way to prevent contamination of your water tank is to make sure it is properly sealed and to disconnect the downpipes to the tank as soon as there is a bushfire risk.

Do not reconnect the downpipes until the roof has been cleaned after the bushfire, either manually or after a flush of rain.

Detecting tank water contamination

If your water looks, smells or tastes unusual, then it is likely to be contaminated. Do not use the water for drinking or food preparation, and do not give it to animals.

Water that is not suitable for drinking can still be used on the garden. Water testing is not necessary, as contamination is easily identified by a change in taste, smell or clarity.

Debris or dead animals on your roof or in the gutters should be removed. Use gloves and place in a plastic bag for disposal. Your tank water should be disinfected before re-using.

Disinfecting tank water

Water can be disinfected by bringing it to a rolling boil or by adding chlorine.

For every 1,000 litres of water in the tank, you can safely add either:

- Approximately 125 ml or 125 g of 4 per cent household bleach. Avoid using bleaches that contain detergents or other chemicals, such as perfumes
- Approximately 40 ml or 40 g of 12.5 per cent chlorine liquid swimming pool chlorine or dairy factory chlorine.
- Approximately 8 ml or 8 g of 65 per cent granular 'swimming pool' chlorine.

After chlorinating, you should wait at least 24 hours before using the water to allow for harmful microorganisms to be treated.

Contact us

We're here to help! For more information about water tanks please contact Council's Public Health team on 1300 BAW BAW (1300 229 229) or 5624 2411 or email

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