Build Back Better

Drinking water & rainwater tanks

This fact sheet provides information about how to manage drinking water and rainwater tanks after bushfire.

Level 4 water restrictions that were in place for the Brogo-Bermagui water supply system have been lifted as at 25 February. The introduction of the Level 4 restrictions was part of a suite of emergency measures implemented, that also included carting water from Bega and Australian Defence Force setting up their water purification and desalination system to help supplement drinking water supplies.

The situation remains dynamic and any heavy rainfall in the catchment could again lead to action to guarantee drinking water quality.

Rainwater quality after bushfires

Rainwater with light amounts of ash can still be used for drinking purposes and showering. While ash may affect taste and odour, and may stain clothing, it’s not considered a health risk. Ash will usually settle in the tank.

If there is a significant amount of ash in the water, use the water for other purposes such as toilet flushing or in the garden, then drain and clean the tank.

Boil your water at a rolling boil before drinking if you suspect or find dead animals in your tank or roof catchment and you have no other drinking water supply. Any dead animals should be removed.

If you don’t have electricity to boil your water, use unscented household bleach (containing 4% - 5% available chlorine), add 2 drops of bleach to 1 litre of water (or 4 drops if the water is cloudy), mix well, and allow to stand for 30 minutes before use.

Do not drink the water if the tank is plastic and has been damaged by fire, if internal linings have been damaged, or if plumbing to or from the tank is damaged. Drain and clean the tank, repair as necessary, and refill with carted potable water. Bottled water or potable water from Council’s water fill stations are also safe alternatives.

After a bushfire and before it rains

Clean your roof catchment to reduce the amount of ash and material being washed into your tank.

- Disconnect the down pipes from your tank. If you are unable to clean the roof, let this first rainfall run to waste.
- Clean your roof to remove ash and material if this can be done safely.
- Check roof and guttering for dead animals and remove if you find any.
- Check filters and clean if necessary.
- Flush household taps to clear any ash and/or dirty water before use.
Cleaning your rainwater tank

Working inside a tank can be dangerous and is not recommended. There are professional tank cleaning companies who can do the job. If a tank cleaning company is not available, drain what water is left, and flush with clean water to remove ash and built up material. If you can use an access hole to pressure hose without being in the tank, this is a good option for clearing large amounts of material. Remember to clean your roof and gutters and check for dead animals after your tank is cleaned and before reconnecting downpipes to your tank.

Can I drink from an agriculture water tank?

These tanks are primarily used for the purposes of firefighting and agricultural irrigation and are generally not properly maintained to ensure safe drinking water. Occasionally they may also have been used to store chemicals that are not safe for ingestion by humans. Often, rinsing the tank is not sufficient to clean the tank and prepare it to store potable water.

Unless you are certain that the water in an agriculture water tank is potable water, do not drink water from these containers. Potable water is water that is safe to drink or to use for food preparation, making ice, bathing, cleaning teeth or giving to animals.

Managing damaged water meters

Council Water and Sewer teams are replacing water meters that have been damaged at homes. You can contact Council’s Customer Service team on 02 6499 2222 to arrange a replacement. If your property has been destroyed by fire, your meter will not be replaced at this time, but a backflow prevention device will be fitted.

Accessing water to fill up your rainwater tank

Contact a registered water carter who can cart potable water from Council’s water fill stations and refill your tank or go to Council’s website to find information on the mains water fill options available to rural customers.

Water Car ters

The following water car ters are registered with Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyneve Contracting</td>
<td>0434979835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJ Curtis Contracting Pty Ltd</td>
<td>0409 461 957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP Hetherington &amp; Co</td>
<td>0437 769 625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeves Transport P/L</td>
<td>0412 903 085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billanbri</td>
<td>0427 957 343</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelin &amp; Son</td>
<td>64961 324</td>
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<tr>
<td>AquaOne Earthmoving Pty Ltd</td>
<td>0438 889 180 or 02 64933 523</td>
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If you have questions or concerns please contact the Recovery Centre on (02) 6499 2345. We’re here to help