



Media Release

Central Coast Water Board Offers Free Domestic Well Testing

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SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIF. – The [Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board](#) is providing free water quality testing for residents that get their drinking water from domestic wells to inform them about potential health risks associated with nitrate contamination and other harmful chemicals that may be present in their drinking water.

Previous testing suggests the likelihood of widespread groundwater contamination problems that warrants periodic testing of the estimated 44,000 domestic wells throughout the region. Of the 1,627 domestic wells tested by various entities in 2014, more than one out of every four wells exceeded public health drinking water standards for nitrate. In some areas, testing showed more than 40 percent of the wells exceeded safe drinking water standards. Arsenic is also a common contaminate in domestic wells.

“Protecting the public’s health is our highest priority. The well sampling project aligns with that priority and with our staff’s efforts to assist disadvantaged individuals in identifying and addressing unsafe drinking water conditions where they exist,” said Dr. Jean-Pierre Wolff, chair of the Central Coast Water Board.

In many agricultural areas, nitrate often seeps into well water from three main sources -- agricultural fertilizers, treated sewage and the waste from livestock. Water contaminated with nitrate can lead to health risks, especially for infants under six months old and women who are pregnant or nursing. Drinking or cooking with water with excessive nitrate levels can affect the body’s ability to carry oxygen. Arsenic can trigger a range of symptoms from serious to severe – stomach cramps and nausea to partial paralysis, even blindness.

One major stumbling block is that the traditional remedy for substandard water – boiling it in attempt to kill harmful bacteria – only makes matters worse for nitrate. Boiling actually increases the concentration of nitrate in the water, exacerbating the health risks.

The well testing program has support from many officials in the Central Coast Region, including Luis A. Alejo, chairman of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors and a leading advocate for safe drinking water.



“This new and free Drinking Water Well Testing Program is really needed in Monterey County,” Alejo said. “I encourage residents in unincorporated Monterey County to get their wells tested to ensure your water is clean and safe for your families. We hope we can help more families have good water quality in their homes.”

Free water quality testing is available to people living in the Central Coast Region (i.e., Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara Counties, southern Santa Clara County, and very small portions of San Mateo, Kern and Ventura Counties) that get their drinking water from a private domestic or shared well that is not part of a public water system. Testing services will be provided by staff fluent in Spanish and English.

Anyone whose well tests positive for nitrate will be provided with detailed information about what to do next and will be guided to free drinking water replacement programs.

“Our well sampling program supports the state’s human right to safe drinking water by helping those dependent on domestic and small water systems know what’s in their drinking water. With that information, they can take action when necessary, and we and other agencies can provide assistance.” said John Robertson, Central Coast Water Board executive officer.

Central Coast residents wishing to have their drinking water tested can call a bilingual, toll-free number (844) 613-5152, or go to <https://sites.google.com/view/ccgroundwater> to schedule testing.

Participants will receive sampling results along with [A Guide for Private Domestic Well Owners](#) that includes information on recommended water quality testing, how to interpret the results, what to do if the well is contaminated and how to protect the well from contamination. Information on free replacement water programs will also be provided.

Spanish versions of the materials will be distributed to participants as needed. In addition to testing for various minerals, the free testing is focused on the two groundwater contaminants most commonly found in public water system wells statewide - nitrate and arsenic. Testing for various pesticides and/or 1,2,3-trichloropropane, hexavalent chromium and perchlorate may also be available in certain areas. To see a fact sheet on this, [visit here](#).

Residents who suspect their drinking water contains unsafe levels of nitrate should not drink it, cook with it or use it to make baby formula. It’s important to remember that boiling drinking water will not remove nitrate – it will increase the nitrate concentration and associated health risks.

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