

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR**

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

Jennifer J. Pruet, Deputy Secretary

## **NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release***Sept. 23, 2020**

*The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.*

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### **State offering free domestic well water tests in Española, Santa Fe**

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and Department of Health (DOH) are excited to announce the first free water testing event since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic will take place this weekend in Española and Santa Fe.

Surveys show the majority of New Mexico's private well users haven't had their water tested, even though most do not have water treatment systems installed.

To save consumers money – tests are valued at around \$150 – and to educate the public about safe drinking water, NMED and DOH are hosting two free domestic well water testing events on September 25 and 26 while adhering to COVID-Safe Practices to protect staff and all community members who participate.

“With 20 percent of New Mexicans using private water wells, our free water testing events are a great opportunity for private well owners to learn more about what is in their water and how to keep it safe and clean,” said NMED Cabinet Secretary James Kenney. “Access to clean water during the pandemic is critical. I encourage Rio Arriba and Santa Fe County residents to come out and participate.”

The free testing will be available:

- **3-6 p.m. Friday, September 25** at the NMED Española Field Office, 712 La Joya Street, Española, NM 87532
- **9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturday, September 26** at the Harold L. Runnels Building, 1190 St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505

To have water tested, residents need to bring a sample of their water to the event. Use these guidelines to ensure the sample is collected correctly:

- Let the water run for 2-3 minutes before collecting the sample.
- Fill a clean glass or plastic container without any strong odors with at least a quart or liter of your well water.
- If the home has a whole house filtration system, collect the water at the well head prior to any filtration or softener systems if possible.
- Fill the container with water as close to the time of testing as possible.

Along with the water sample, residents should bring basic information known about the well such as well depth, depth to water, well casing material (i.e., steel, PVC), well latitude and longitude and distance from the well to the nearest septic tank or leachfield system.

If well owners are unable to attend the event but would like to have their water tested, they may have a sample brought to the event by a family member or neighbor, provided the bottle is clearly labeled and has the owner's name, phone number, address and well information attached. Only water that comes from homes that rely on private wells for drinking water will be tested.

Tests will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to the first 150 participants at each event or while supplies are available. Test results will be mailed to households following the event.

COVID-Safe Practices will be adhered to at the event. NMED and DOH staff will wear face coverings and practice social distancing, and participants must do the same.

The state's "water fairs" provide an opportunity for well owners to measure pH, specific conductance and levels of nitrates in their water. These constituents may be naturally occurring or result from sources including fertilizer, animal waste and septic tanks. Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can be dangerous to pregnant women and infants. Other contaminants may lead to other health problems and aesthetic nuisances. Water will also be tested for arsenic levels. Arsenic is naturally occurring and has been measured in water from private wells throughout the state, sometimes at concentrations that exceed drinking water quality health standards.

"Well testing is critical, as private well characteristics can vary greatly from one well to the next, even if the wells are right next to one another," said Matthew Smith, a geoscientist with the Environment Department's Ground Water Quality Bureau.

The upkeep of private wells is the responsibility of the well owner. While the state's Environment and Health Departments conduct water fairs to help educate private well owners about drinking water and well maintenance, these state agencies do not have jurisdiction over private wells.

Water from public water systems (i.e., local water utilities) is tested periodically and those results are available [here](#).

More information about the water fair program is available [here](#).

More information about wells, water quality and safety is available [here](#).

For more information about these water fairs, please contact the Environment Department at 505-827-2900.

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