



MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR
James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

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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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Environment Department to offer 200 free bacteria test kits for Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon Fire Response

LAS VEGAS & TAOS – As part of the New Mexico Environment Department’s (NMED) ongoing emergency response efforts, NMED is providing free bacteria tests kits for residents who rely on private wells for their drinking water.

Impacted residents can pick-up a free test kit at the NMED Las Vegas field office on June 24 and the Taos field office on July 6 in response to the recent Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires.

The free kits will be available for pick-up and drop-off at the following times and locations:

| Location | Test Kit Pick-Up Window | Test Kit Drop-Off Window |
|--|---|--|
| Las Vegas field office 2538 Ridgerunner Rd Las Vegas, NM 87701 | Friday, June 24, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | Monday, June 27, 2022, 8:00- 11:00 a.m. |
| Taos field office 145 Roy Rd, Suite B Taos, NM 87571 | Wednesday, July 6, 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | Thursday, July 7, 8:00- 11:00 a.m. |

After a wildfire, private wells can be contaminated and unsafe to use for drinking water and other purposes. “As a result of the widespread destruction inflicted by the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires, we are providing free bacteria water tests for those private drinking water well owners who were impacted,” said **Water Protection Division Acting Director John Rhoderick**. “By extending the days, times, and locations for picking up and dropping off test kits, we hope that more members of the community ensure the safety of their drinking water.”

To have water tested, residents need to pick up a test kit from either the NMED Las Vegas or Taos field offices between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. on June 24 and July 6, respectively. The test kits will include instructions and are required to be dropped off no later than 11 a.m. on June 27 to the Las Vegas NMED field office or July 7 to the Taos NMED field office. Kits will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to the first 200 participants (100 Las Vegas/100 Taos). Test results will be mailed to households after the State Laboratory Division completes the laboratory analysis.

If well owners are unavailable the day of pick-up or drop-off but would like to have their water tested, they may have a test kit delivered by a family member or neighbor instead.

The upkeep of private wells is the responsibility of the well owner. While NMED may conduct emergency bacteria testing to help private well owners following natural disasters, the Department does not have jurisdiction over private wells.

An average bacteria test costs about \$100 but is completely free through this program. To date, NMED distributed over 100 bacteria tests for private drinking water wells in response to the state's 2022 wildfire season, providing \$10,000 in value to communities in New Mexico affected by the fires. NMED tracks its investments in communities as part of its performance measures and targeted [investing \\$65 million](#) throughout the state in fiscal year 2022.

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

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

For more information about water fairs, please contact the Environment Department at 505-827- 2900. Visit NMED's calendar, [here](#), to find out about future water fairs and other events.

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