

**NEWS RELEASE***For Immediate Release***Sept. 6, 2022**

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 100 free bacteria sample kits in flooding response due to Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon Fire

LAS VEGAS, – Heavy monsoons over the burn scar of the recent Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires have resulted in flooding that can result in bacteria developing in private wells that supply drinking water for many residents in Northern New Mexico. In response, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is providing free bacteria tests kits to private well water owners at the Las Vegas field office on September 13th.

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

- Pick up sample kits at the Las Vegas field office on **Tuesday, September 13th, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**
- Drop off sample on **Thursday, September 15th, 2022, by noon**

Las Vegas field office

2538 Ridgerunner Rd
Las Vegas, NM 87701

“The combination of fires and floods have put significant strain on residents who rely on private well water for their drinking needs,” said **Ground Water Quality Bureau Chief Justin Ball**. “These tests provide needed assurance to residents that their private water well system is free from harmful bacteria.”

To have water tested, residents need to pick up a sample kit from the NMED Las Vegas field offices on September 13th. The sample kits will include instructions and need to be returned no later than 12 p.m. on September 15th. Kits will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to the first 100 participants. Test results will be mailed to households approximately two weeks after the event. Testing will be conducted at the State Laboratory Division in Albuquerque.

If well owners are unavailable the day of pick up/drop off but would like to have their water tested, they may have a bacteria kit picked up or dropped off by a family member or neighbor.

While the Environment Department may conduct emergency bacteria testing to help private well owners following natural disasters, it does not have jurisdiction over private wells. The upkeep of private wells is the responsibility of the well owner. Well owners can have their water tested on their own through a [certified laboratory](#).

An average bacteria test costs a family about \$100 but is completely free at this event. NMED has distributed over 124 bacteria tests for private drinking water wells in response to the state's wildfires

providing \$1,240 in value to communities in New Mexico affected by the fires. Emergency bacterial testing is just one of the many ways in which NMED is assisting New Mexicans impacted by wildfires and subsequent flooding, including administering the Full Service Debris Removal Program, providing technical assistance to water operators throughout the region, issuing water advisories for impacted systems, and streamlining the permitting process for upgrades to the City of Las Vegas's municipal water utility.

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 these [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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