



Media Release

Free Well Testing Program Expands to San Benito County

Residents Given Info to Ensure Safe Drinking Water

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Contact: Angela Schroeter, Central Coast Water Board
Angela.Schroeter@waterboards.ca.gov

SAN LUIS OBISPO – A free testing program for Central Coast residents who get their drinking water from domestic wells expands to San Benito County next week.

Introduced by the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Board in 2017 to provide residents the information to determine if their drinking water is safe, the program already has tested more than 450 wells in San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties. Participants also receive details about water treatment options and the availability of free bottled water.

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

Officials recommend that well users check their drinking water at least once a year. In some areas of the region, testing results indicate that approximately one in four domestic drinking water wells have unsafe levels of nitrate, arsenic or other common contaminants. For those residents, free bottled water programs may be available.

Drinking water contamination can result from a variety of land uses. For example, some areas are naturally high in arsenic. In rural agricultural areas, nitrate can seep into well water from fertilizers or septic tanks. Water contaminated with nitrate can lead to health risks, especially for infants less than six months old and women who are pregnant or nursing. Drinking or cooking with water containing high nitrate levels can affect the body’s ability to carry oxygen. If residents find their wells have unsafe levels of nitrate, they are advised to get the appropriate treatment or use bottled water. Boiling the water in this situation is not safe, and, in fact, worsens the problem by increasing the nitrate concentration. Residents concerned about the possible health risks incurred from drinking their well water should contact their doctor.

“I encourage people to take advantage of this free opportunity to have their wells tested to ensure their drinking water is safe for their families,” said Darryl Wong, Director of the Department of Environmental Health for the County of San Benito.

The testing services are provided by staff fluent in Spanish and English. Many residents have already signed up for the expanded testing that begins next week. Residents wishing to participate can call a bilingual, toll-free number (844) 613-5152, or go to <https://sites.google.com/view/ccgroundwater>

