

News from the NH Department of Environmental Services

Protect Your Family: Test Your Private Well Water National Public Health Week is April 2 to 8

Concord, NH – The N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES) is urging homeowners in New Hampshire to test their private well water to ensure their drinking water is clean and safe for everyday use. Nearly 40 percent of New Hampshire residents get their drinking water from private wells, which are not subject to the same testing regulations as public water systems.

How do you know if your well is polluted? Don't rely on your neighbors! Even if your neighbors' wells are clean, that does not mean that yours will be, too. Have your well water tested every three to five years for most tests, but test every year for bacteria and nitrates.

Both human-caused and naturally-occurring pollutants are often found in private wells. Bacteria and nitrates, which can lead to immediate and serious health conditions, may be found in well water as a result of a poorly performing septic system or a nearby agricultural source. Across the northeastern U.S., two naturally-occurring elements, arsenic and radon, are also commonly found in well water. Scientific studies associate long-term exposure to arsenic and radon with cancer and other health effects.

Testing the quality of well water is simple and relatively inexpensive. A good time to remember to test is during National Public Health Week, which is April 2-8, 2012. DES has a website dedicated to private well testing. Go to www.des.nh.gov; in the A to Z List, find "Private Well Testing." Homeowners can find information about when to test your well, potential risks for private wells and laboratories that offer private well testing.

For additional information about private wells, read DES fact sheets at www.des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/index.htm.

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