



SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR

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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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Free Water Tests for Pojoaque Basin Private Well Owners Offered by Santa Fe County, NM Environment & Health Departments

Friday, July 7, Noon-5 p.m. & Saturday, July 8, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at Pojoaque High School Gymnasium

Santa Fe – Santa Fe [County](#), the [New Mexico Environment Department](#) (NMED) and the [New Mexico Department of Health](#) (DOH) are hosting a free Domestic Well Water Testing event for residents in the Pojoaque Basin with private wells serving homes not connected to a public water utility.

The event will be held at the Pojoaque High School Gymnasium located at 1574 NM 502, Pojoaque, on Friday, July 7 from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturday, July 8 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

These free well water tests will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. There will be two types of tests: lab tests (which include uranium testing) and in-field tests (which do not include uranium testing). The Pojoaque Basin is an area known for naturally occurring uranium.

The lab tests will be offered to the first 500 participants with well water samples from within the Pojoaque Basin. Lab tests include laboratory analysis for iron, nitrate, arsenic, manganese, fluoride, uranium, electrical conductivity and pH.

The in-field test will be offered to the first 200 participants with well water samples that are not from within the Pojoaque Basin. In-field tests include field analysis for sulfate, nitrate, arsenic, fluoride, iron, electrical conductivity and pH. Those residents from outside the Pojoaque Basin area may choose to obtain the lab test, however a charge of \$91.38 will apply. (Checks only. No cash accepted).

As part of the [Aamodt Settlement Agreement](#), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is designing a new Regional Water System that will serve both Pueblo and non-Pueblo residents of the Pojoaque Basin. Under the Settlement Agreement, domestic well owners that accept the Settlement Agreement will have the opportunity to formally elect to connect to the County Water Utility or continue using their well water. Santa Fe County anticipates that the Federal Court will set a well election date for some time prior to the end of the year.

(more)

“The Water Fair is a unique opportunity for Pojoaque Basin well owners to better understand the quality of their private well water prior to making a well election,” said Henry Roybal, Santa Fe County District 1 Commissioner.

Various well water constituents such as nitrates, arsenic, and uranium, may be naturally occurring or may result from other sources. Nitrates in well water, for instance, can be naturally occurring, or can also be caused by fertilizers, animal waste, or nearby septic tanks. Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can be dangerous to pregnant women and infants, while other contaminants may lead to aesthetic nuisances and other health problems. Arsenic in well water is naturally occurring and has been measured in water from private wells throughout the state at concentrations that exceed recommended safe drinking water quality standards. Uranium in well water is also naturally occurring. It has been detected in many wells in the Pojoaque Basin at levels exceeding safe drinking water standards.

Well owners are encouraged to periodically test their drinking water, although such tests can be costly, starting at \$150. Free test results from the Pojoaque Basin Water Fair will be mailed or emailed to participants following the event.

The New Mexico Environment Department’s Ground Water Quality Bureau’s Kathryn Hayden said, “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. According to NMED’s survey responses, most private well owners in New Mexico do not use any sort of water treatment system, so it’s especially important for those well owners to understand what is in their well water. Most New Mexicans surveyed have never had their well water tested before or are not sure if they have done so.”

To support well owners, more information about wells, water quality and safety is available at <https://nmtracking.org/water> . To have water tested, residents need to bring a sample of their water to the event. The Health and Environment Departments suggest:

- Fill a clean glass or plastic container, without any strong odors, with at least a quart or liter of your well water.
- Collect the water before it runs through any water treatment or filters such as a reverse osmosis, a carbon filter, or a water softener. If the home has a whole house filtration system, collect the water at the well head.
- Let the water run for a couple of minutes before collecting the sample.
- Fill the container with the water as close to the time of testing as possible.

Along with the water sample, residents are asked, if possible, to bring the following voluntary information about their well: well depth, depth to water, well casing material (i.e., steel, pvc), distance from well to the nearest septic tank/leachfield system, OSE permit number and well coordinates (which can be obtained using Google Maps). A sample form for gathering this useful information is available at:

https://nmtracking.org/view/pdf/environment/water/private_wells/water_fairs/WF_form.pdf

If well owners are unable to attend the event but would like to have their water tested, they may have their sample brought to the event by a family member or neighbor, as long as the bottle is clearly labeled with their name, phone number, and address and information about the well is attached. The free water tests are only for water that comes from homes relying on private wells for drinking water. Water from households that are connected to city/community/public water system is periodically tested by those systems and those results are available through the Environment Department at: <https://dww.water.net.env.nm.gov/DWW/>

For further information about this water testing opportunity, please contact Santa Fe County Utilities at 505-986-2426 or the New Mexico Environment Department at 505-827-1046. For more information about the Aamodt Settlement, please visit Santa Fe County’s Aamodt page at:

http://www.santafecountynm.gov/public_works/utilities/aamodt

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.For your Twitter Feed: Free Water Tests-Pojoaque Private Wells, Fri. 7/7, Noon-5p, Sat. 7/8, 9a-2p Pojoaque High School Gym <http://bit.ly/2u8A9dD> #NMED #NM

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For your Facebook Feed: Free Water Tests, Friday, July 7, Noon-5 p.m. & Saturday, July 8, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at Pojoaque High School Gymnasium for Pojoaque Basin Private Well Owners Offered by Santa Fe County and NM Environment & Health Departments. The event is for residents in the Pojoaque Basin with private wells serving homes not connected to a public water utility.

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