



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate 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 and Health Departments to offer 100 free domestic water and bacteria well tests in Mora for Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon Fire Response

MORA – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) are hosting a free domestic well water testing event at Mora County Complex on Saturday, June 4 to residents affected by the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires.

The free testing will be available:

8:30–12:00p.m. Saturday, June 4 at Mora County Complex, 1 Courthouse Dr., Mora, NM 87732.

Well water tests typically cost about \$150 but will be free to the first 100 participants or while supplies last. As an added benefit, NMED and DOH are providing the added service of bacteria testing at no extra charge. Test results will be mailed to households following the event.

After a wildfire, private wells can be contaminated and unsafe to use for drinking water and other purposes.

“Many New Mexicans are dealing with wildfires and their aftermath,” said **NMED Cabinet Secretary James Kenney**. “Knowing that one’s private well water is safe to drink plays a big role in returning to normalcy and protecting your family during a devastating ordeal.”

To have water tested, residents need to bring a sample of their water to the event. Use these guidelines to ensure the sample is collected correctly:

- Let the water run for 2-3 minutes before collecting the sample.
- Fill a clean glass or plastic container without any strong odors with at least a quart or liter of your well water.
- If the home has a whole house filtration system, collect the water at the well head prior to any filtration or softener systems if possible.
- Fill the container with water as close to the time of testing as possible.

Along with the water sample, residents should bring basic information known about the well such as well depth, depth to water, well casing material (i.e., steel, PVC), well latitude and longitude and distance from the well to the nearest septic tank or leachfield system.

If well owners are unable to attend the event but would like to have their water tested, they may have a sample brought to the event by a family member or neighbor, provided the bottle is clearly labeled and

has the owner's name, phone number, address and well information attached. Only water that comes from homes that rely on private wells for drinking water will be tested.

The state's "water fairs" provide an opportunity for well owners to measure pH, specific conductance and levels of nitrates in their water. These constituents may be naturally occurring or result from sources including fertilizer, animal waste and septic tanks. Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can be dangerous to pregnant women and infants. Other contaminants may lead to other health problems and aesthetic nuisances.

Water will also be tested for arsenic levels. Arsenic is naturally occurring and has been measured in water from private wells throughout the state, sometimes at concentrations that exceed drinking water quality health standards.

While the state's Environment and Health Departments conduct water fairs to help educate private well owners about drinking water and well maintenance, these state agencies do not have jurisdiction over private wells.

Since July 1, 2021, NMED has tested 167 private drinking water wells over seven water fairs providing \$25,050 in value to communities in New Mexico. 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 the water fair program is available [here](#).

More information about wells, water quality and safety is 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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