



MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 20, 2024

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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Precautionary water advisory for Ruidoso and surrounding areas following the South Fork Fire and Salt Fire

Gavilan Hills drinking water system also under precautionary water advisory

LINCOLN COUNTY - A precautionary drinking water advisory for several public water systems located in Lincoln County has been issued by the New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Drinking Water Bureau and the New Mexico Department of Health (NMHealth) due to possible contamination related to the wildfire impacts.

Residents using these water systems are advised to seek alternative drinking water sources to ensure public health and safety. Water from these systems can be used for other activities, such as washing clothes and dishes, and general nondrinking uses. Avoid bathing infants and young children with this water. People who are immunocompromised/immunosuppressed, and/or have open cuts, wounds, or sores should not use the water to bathe until notified that the water is safe.

The precautionary drinking water advisory applies to these water systems:

Table with 2 columns: Drinking Water System, Population Served. Rows include Ruidoso Water System (19,195), Alto Lakes Water & Sanitation District (3,406), Tall Pines Water Association (84), Cedar Creek (536), Alpine Village (253), Smokey Bear Ranger Station (180), High Country Lodge (194), Eagle Creek Shell Convenience Store (800), Eagle Creek Sports Complex (250), Gavilan Hills Water Association (56).

At this time, this precautionary drinking water advisory applies only to the drinking water from the systems noted above, however as more information becomes available about the impacts from the wildfires, NMED may issue additional advisories for other public water systems in the area.

In addition to the precautionary advisory for the public water systems, the NMHealth recommends that private well owners follow these tips when you can do so safely, to help protect your health and respond after a wildfire:

Step 1: Well inspection and repair – check for damage to well components, including electrical systems, and remove debris.

Step 2: Flush the well until the water runs clear (approximately 30 minutes to one hour) and check water pressure. This may best be done by a well contractor.

Step 3: Test your well water for Coliform bacteria including (E. coli), nitrate, and other contaminants of concern.

Step 4: Disinfect your well if the water tests positive for bacteria (E. coli) or repairs have been done. This may best be done by a well contractor.

Private well owners should have their well water tested at a certified drinking water laboratory before consuming to ensure contamination has not occurred. At a minimum, water should be tested for bacterial contamination. If well piping (PVC or HDPE) is damaged, tests should include volatile organic compounds (VOC's) such as BTEX. A list of certified labs is available [here](#).

In New Mexico, private wells are not regulated, which means residents are responsible for ensuring the quality of their drinking water. Well owners can learn more about protecting their drinking water supply and health before, during and after a disaster [here](#).

Burn scars may leave an area more vulnerable to flash flooding, which could impact drinking water sources. For information about wildfires in their communities, residents are encouraged to check the [NMFireinfo](#) website. Private well owners are encouraged to take precautions to prepare for floods. Residents are encouraged to continue implementing water conservation efforts in all areas impacted by wildfires.

NMED will continue to monitor the South Fork Fire and Salt Fire and provide technical assistance to public water systems that may be impacted by this ongoing emergency. As circumstances surrounding the South Fork Fire and Salt Fire continue to develop, NMED and NMHealth will provide information and advice for residents regarding any confirmed threats to public health from local drinking water supplies.

More information about this precautionary water advisories in English and Spanish is available [here](#). For more information on today's announcement, please call the Drinking Water Bureau's Compliance Supervisor Brandi Littleton at 575-323-4298.

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Kate Cardenas, Non-Discrimination Coordinator | NMED | 1190 St. Francis Dr., Suite N4050 | P.O. Box 5469 | Santa Fe, NM 87502 or (505) 827-2855 or nd.coordinator@state.nm.us. If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a NMED program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator.

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