

**SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR**Butch Tongate, *Cabinet Secretary*J.C. Borrego, *Deputy Secretary***NEWS RELEASE****March 7, 2017**

Contact: Allison Scott Majure, Communications Director
New Mexico Environment Department
505.231.8800 | Allison.majure@state.nm.us

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.

NM Departments of Environment and Health Bring 200 Free Water Tests to Otero County's Private Well Owners on Friday and Saturday

Alamogordo and Surrounding Area March 10 and March 11 at the Alamogordo Emergency Operations Center

Santa Fe – New Mexico [Environment Department](#) (NMED) and the New Mexico [Department of Health](#) (DOH) are hosting a free [Domestic Well Water Testing](#) event in Alamogordo on Friday and Saturday at the Alamogordo Emergency Operations Center. Well owners are encouraged to periodically test their drinking water, although such tests can be costly, starting at \$150.

The event will be at the Alamogordo Emergency Operations Center, 1180 US Highway 70 West, Alamogordo, NM 88310 from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, March 10 and from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday, March 11. These free well water tests will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to the first 200 participants, or while supplies are available. Test results will be mailed to households following the event.

This money-saving opportunity is the chance for Alamogordo area households to check pH, specific conductance, and the levels of fluoride, iron, sulfate, and nitrate in their well 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, while other contaminants may lead to aesthetic nuisances and other health problems.

Additionally, well owners will be able to check the arsenic level in their water, which is not commonly included in general testing. Arsenic is naturally occurring and has been measured in water from private wells throughout the state at concentrations that exceed recommended drinking water quality health standards.

About 20 percent of New Mexicans receive their water from private wells, which are not monitored routinely. "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 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," said Kathryn Hayden of the Environment Department's Ground Water Quality Bureau. "Most New Mexicans surveyed have never had their well water tested before or are not sure if they have done so."

"The Environment Department provides the advice and assistance that New Mexicans need to ensure that clean drinking water is available," said Environment Secretary Butch Tongate. "Our free water fair testing events are

conducted throughout the state, to encourage participation, heighten awareness, and to educate well owners about safe, clean drinking water.”

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 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 an R.O., 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 should bring basic information known about the well such as well depth, depth to water, well casing material (i.e., steel, pvc), well latitude/longitude, and distance from well to the nearest septic tank/leachfield system. 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 departments will only test water that comes from homes that rely on private wells for drinking water. Water from households that are connected to city/community/public water system is periodically tested and those results are available at <https://dww.water.net.env.nm.gov/DWW/>

For further information about this water testing opportunity, please contact the Environment Department at 505-827-1046 or Kathryn.hayden@state.nm.us.

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