



County of Santa Cruz



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
Environmental Health Division
Water Resources Program

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Frequently Asked Questions

Free Water Quality Testing Program for Santa Cruz County Household Wells

Q: What is the purpose of the Santa Cruz County Drinking Water Well Testing Program?

A: The program aims to provide vital information to residents regarding potential health risks associated with contamination in their household well water supply. The program will also support income qualified residents by providing free alternative water sources, such as bottled water or small water treatment systems.

Q: Why is this testing important?

A: Household wells and small water systems with fourteen (14) or fewer connections, are not required to test for many of the contaminants tested by this program. Therefore, these residents may be unaware if their well water is safe to drink. **Many of the most common contaminants do not change the appearance, taste, or odor of your water. Residents relying on untested wells may inadvertently be exposing themselves to contaminated water.**

Q: Who is eligible for the free well testing?

A: All residents of Santa Cruz County who rely on a household water well for their drinking water are eligible. Household wells can serve four (4) or fewer households.

Q: What will participants receive?

A: All participants will receive sampling results for twenty-three (23) different parameters (listed below) along with a comprehensive [Guide for Private Domestic Well Owners](#), which contains valuable information on recommended water quality testing procedures, interpretation of results, steps to take if the well is contaminated, and strategies to protect the well from further contamination. Spanish versions of these materials are available upon request.

Sampling Tests for the Following:

- 1,2,3-Trichloropropane
- Arsenic
- Nitrate as N
- Perchlorate
- Chromium, Hexavalent
- pH
- Specific Conductance
- Total Dissolved Solids
- Alkalinity (Total)
- Potassium
- Magnesium
- Calcium
- Sodium
- Chloride
- Sulfate
- Carbonate as CO₃
- Hydroxide
- Bicarbonate as HCO₃
- Bacteria; Total Coliform and E. coli
- Iron
- Manganese
- Hardness
- Hydrogen Sulfide

Income qualified residents are also eligible to receive the following water quality assistance services:

- Bottled Water Delivery
- Point of Use Treatment Systems. *These are small treatment systems that remove contaminants and provide a source of safe drinking water in the home.*
- Bulk Water delivery to an existing storage tank
- Additional technical support for addressing water quality problems

Q: Who is eligible for water quality assistance services?

A: To qualify to receive services, households must show:

- * High levels of one of the tested contaminants in their well water;
- * Make less than \$73,524 a year (80% of CA State Median); OR
- * Be enrolled in the PG&E California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) program.

Q: What does the testing process involve?

A: The entire sampling process will take approximately thirty (30) minutes to an hour per well and the well will need to be pumping most of this time.

The sampling technician will collect the sample as close to the well head as possible and prior to any treatment. Water that has undergone filtration or treatment cannot be used. The sampling technician will write field notes and take a photo of the sampling location.

Q: Is my personal information secure?

A: All personal information gathered for testing purposes will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed to immigration or law enforcement agencies. The results of the water quality analyses will be available to the public in an anonymized way

Q: How often should I test my well water?

A: It is strongly advised that residents dependent on household wells undergo annual water testing or more frequently if you notice a change in your water (e.g. taste, appearance, odor, etc.) to ensure its safety.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: More information about how to maintain a household well can be found at the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health webpage: me-qr.com/l/WellTesting

