

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Paul Susca, NHDES, (603) 271-7061

Laurie Rardin, Dartmouth College Superfund Research Program, (603) 650-1523

MEDIA ADVISORY

New Tools Empower Communities and Help Private Well Owners Test and Treat Well Water for Arsenic and Other Contaminants

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and Dartmouth College are hosting a conference call for the media and New Hampshire municipal officials to discuss new tools and information regarding the importance of private well water testing, specifically a new Well Water Community Action Toolkit for cities and towns to use to help increase well testing. More information about the conference call is below:

WHAT: A 30-minute conference call with community leaders, experts from NHDES, NHDHHS, USGS and Dartmouth College

WHEN: Friday, May 20 from 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM

WHERE: Please call 888-206-2266 and put in passcode 6723474 when prompted. If you plan to participate in the call, please email Paul Susca at paul.susca@des.nh.gov

WHY: As a result of high-profile drinking water contamination incidents and a recent National Cancer Institute study on bladder cancer and private wells in northern New England, awareness of contaminants in private well water is growing, as is public interest in well testing. The purposes of this conference call are:

1) To highlight two new tools which will help private well owners overcome key barriers to private well testing and treatment:

- The “Well Water Community Action Toolkit,” produced by Dartmouth College as part of a grant with NHDES and funded by the CDC, provides a step-by-step resource for all cities and towns to implement well testing activities. Link to the toolkit: <http://m1e.net/c?168996516-Z6Ff1WsVCmMLQ%40387120033-aTVNTmgPbO.1s>
- The “Be Well Informed” online application created by NHDES as part of the same grant provides well owners with recommendations for water treatment methods based on their unique well test results. Link to the application: <http://m1e.net/c?168996516-hjuSFK5mUz7MM%40387120034-FjPaGo/XTqz/I>

2) To provide a brief overview of the two-year study to assess and manage risks associated with exposure from arsenic in private wells that led to the development of the Toolkit and Be Well Informed. Link to the report: <http://m1e.net/c?168996516-zPEAk1swXEp3A%40387120035-epXj73cM1Mulo>

WHO: Hosted by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and the Dartmouth College Superfund Research Program

Community Leaders, Agency Representatives and Researchers participating will include:

Laura Scott, Community Development Director, Windham, NH Cynthia Klevens, Drinking Water Protection Committee, Bow, NH Bruce Stanton, Director, Dartmouth Toxic Metals Superfund Research Program Kathrin Lawlor, Community Engagement Coordinator, Dartmouth Superfund Research Program Carolyn Murray, Director, Community Outreach and Education, Children's Environmental Health & Disease Prevention Research Center at Dartmouth Joe Ayotte, Chief, Groundwater Quality Studies Section, U.S. Geological Survey, NE Water Science Center Lou Barinelli, NH Department of Health & Human Services, Public Health Laboratories Paul Susca, Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau, N.H. Department of Environmental Services – Principal Investigator of the CDC-funded project

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Approximately 46 percent of the state's 1.3 million people use private wells as a source of drinking water. Yet, about one in five private wells contain high levels of arsenic from naturally occurring sources in bedrock. Low-dose arsenic exposure over time has been associated with skin, bladder, and lung cancers and other harmful health effects. A National Cancer Institute study released on May 2, 2016 found that drinking water from private wells, particularly dug wells established during the first half of the 20th century, may have contributed to the elevated risk of bladder cancer that has been observed in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont for over 50 years.

Recent reports of elevated levels of man-made chemicals in well water in some southern New Hampshire locales have also elevated the public's concern over the safety of their drinking water. Those households where private wells supply drinking water carry sole responsibility for maintaining the safety of their water. Consequently, it is up to well users to protect their families by testing their water and, when necessary, installing and maintaining a water treatment system or using other water sources.

Too often, if water looks, smells and tastes good and no one in the family is getting sick, it is thought to be safe. This view is probably more prevalent where there are no obvious sources of contamination nearby. In reality, naturally-occurring contaminants – from our native bedrock – are far more likely to present health hazards than any human activity. Along with naturally-occurring arsenic, most wells in New Hampshire have levels of radon that warrant follow-up testing. Other contaminants – both natural and human in origin – are less common but occur often enough to warrant routine testing.

The work conducted as part of a two-year study funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the N.H. Department of Environmental Services and Department of Health and Human Services was designed to assess and manage risks associated with exposure from arsenic in private wells. The Dartmouth College Superfund Research Program conducted a state-wide survey during year 1, the results of which were used to design, test and evaluate interventions in year 2 aimed at increasing private well owner knowledge and testing of their drinking water. As part of the project, the Dartmouth researchers also estimated the health impact of New Hampshire residents' exposure to arsenic in private well water. The Well Water Community Action Toolkit and the Be Well Informed web application are two of the final products from this two-year effort. The full report provides more details. Key outcomes for this work include: Increased private well owner testing and treatment for arsenic; identification of effective interventions for increasing testing for arsenic by private well owners, community tested outreach materials on arsenic in well water, a well water community action toolkit, and increased capacity for future work with our partners and communities to increase testing and treatment of private wells across the state.

For more information please visit:

<http://m1e.net/c?168996516-mqm8cxN1saVQc%40387120036-9i2G0KA8.Chbw>

<http://m1e.net/c?168996516-8I3jnZ6fxPIj6%40387120037-HGL0vmEcfDa/2> <http://m1e.net/c?168996516-A1QlwDrAsGed.%40387120038-JrXg50pwwL/S%2e>

<http://m1e.net/c?168996516-LmDD/tu4Jwv0s%40387120039-GoZRWMahLcmoM>

www.insmalldoses.org
<http://m1e.net/c?168996516-OXLBQ762fygxE%40387120040-VfO7qGjwYIHt%2e>

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