

THE FOOTHILLS SUN-GAZETTE

Self-Help offers free water testing, home filtration systems

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By: The Foothills Sun-Gazette

PORTERVILLE — Residents in Porterville and the surrounding communities who rely on private water wells as their primary source of drinking water may be consuming water with contaminants such as nitrates.

Self-Help Enterprises, a community development organization that works with communities on water and wastewater issues, is offering free water well testing through April 30 to help residents learn about their water quality. The families of pregnant women and infants, who are among the most vulnerable populations, are encouraged to have their well water tested. Infant formula made with water that has high nitrate levels can restrict the flow of oxygen to the body and can lead to “blue baby syndrome” or even death. Additionally, cooking with nitrate-contaminated water is also dangerous as the nitrates become more concentrated when water is boiled.



Households with unsafe nitrate levels will be provided a home filtration system at no charge

Wells in this area commonly contain unsafe levels of nitrates, which are odorless and have no taste. Therefore, the only way to know if your well water has nitrates is to test the water. The program, funded by the Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-Term Sustainability (CV SALTS), will collect and test water samples at no cost to the resident. Participation forms can be obtained at the Porterville WIC office, the Family HealthCare Network clinic in Porterville or you can schedule an appointment with Self-Help Enterprises. A staff member will meet you at your home at a designated time to collect a water sample. To schedule an appointment, call Donna Mae Perdew at 559-802-1678. Results are usually provided within one week.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has set the Maximum Contamination Level for nitrates at 10 mg/L. If test results exceed this level, a free replacement water option is provided at no cost through bottled water deliveries or an installation of a Point of Use (POU) Water Filtration device. A POU device is installed at a single water connection, typically under the counter of a kitchen sink. The system will filter the water through reverse osmosis and deliver water that is suitable for drinking.

Norma Garcia, who lives on a ranch near Porterville with her husband and two toddlers, participated in the program and learned her well water was unsafe. “When I got the call I immediately stopped using the water,” says Garcia. “I was worried about my children’s health so I stopped using it for cooking and even washing food.”

“Thousands of Tulare County residents rely on private wells, and don’t know what contaminants are in their drinking water.” says Abigail Solis, a Community Development Specialist with Self-Help Enterprises. “We encourage residents to participate in this free program to learn about their water quality and help keep their family healthy.”