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Health Department identifies arsenic in private wells near Gilberts

Testing by the Kane County Health Department has shown that elevated arsenic levels have been found in four private water wells in the Gilberts Glen subdivision within the Village of Gilberts. The Health Department is advising residents who get their water from private wells to have their water tested if they are concerned about its quality.

The majority of the homes in Gilberts are served by a public water supply that draws its water from a different source. Gilberts' public water system is not affected by arsenic.

The Kane County Health Department received a report from a concerned resident of the Gilberts Glen subdivision that a water sample taken from their private well had an arsenic level above the government standard of 10 ppb (parts per billion). In response to that report, Health Department staff collected water samples from homes in Gilberts and Elgin in October to be tested for arsenic.

The Health Department tests detected arsenic levels above the government standard of 10 ppb, ranging from 13 ppb to 26 ppb, in four homes in the Gilberts Glen subdivision. Two homes tested in the Big Timber Acres subdivision in unincorporated Elgin had arsenic levels of less than 1.0 ppb, well below the government standard of 10 ppb.

Arsenic is a metal-like substance found in small amounts in nature. In January 2001 the EPA adopted a new standard for arsenic in drinking water at 10 ppb, replacing the old standard of 50 ppb. Systems were required to comply with the new standard by January 2006. People who drink water containing arsenic in excess of the drinking water standard over many years could experience skin changes, circulation problems and an increased risk of bladder, liver, lung, and skin cancer.

(MORE)

Arsenic Facts:

- Mineral deposits in Illinois in some areas contain high levels of arsenic.
- Arsenic in groundwater also may be the result of contamination caused by hazardous waste or industries that make or use arsenic.
- Arsenic has no smell or taste.
- If elevated levels of arsenic are found in your well, it is recommended that you stop using your water for drinking and preparing food, and consult your local health department regarding water treatment options.
- You can continue to use your well water for bathing and washing clothes without concern.
- Most foods including vegetables, fish, and seafood contain some arsenic.

The health department is currently investigating if the arsenic is naturally occurring or the result of contamination.

The Health Department, in collaboration with the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Village of Gilberts, makes the following recommendations to the public:

- Any resident concerned about their well water should have their water tested. Residents may contact the Illinois Water Survey to request a water test kit (217) 300-7420 or a list of private laboratories is available on the Health Department website at <http://kanehealth.com/PDFs/Environmental/IEPAListAccredittedWaterLabsIL3-10.pdf>. The cost of the test varies between laboratories. If the well water test results are high for arsenic (greater than 10ppb), then install a water treatment system to reduce the level of arsenic and retest the well water.
- Kane County residents may qualify for the county's Emergency Repair program that helps homeowners who are facing a crisis situation brought on by the condition of their home. The program can assist with any mechanical, electrical, structural, or plumbing issue that undermines the integrity of the home or the safety of its occupants. Work covered by homeowners insurance, however, is not eligible. To qualify for the Emergency Repair Program, homeowners must live in the Kane County Community Development Program Area, meet Federal income limits, and have sufficient equity to cover the amount of the loan. For more information, call Community Contacts at (847) 697-8800 or go to www.cci-hci.org.

More information about private water well quality is available by calling the Environmental Health Section at the Health Department at (630) 444-3040.

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