



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2012

Contact: Michael Flanagan

Environmental Health Specialist I

(217) 531-2908 / mflanagan@c-uphd.org

Amy Roberts, Public Relations

(217) 531-4264 / aroberts@c-uphd.org

Groundwater is a Vital Resource

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Promotes National Groundwater Awareness Week

CHAMPAIGN, IL – The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) promotes National Groundwater Awareness Week, March 11-17, 2012. According to the National Ground Water Association®, groundwater is essential to the health and well-being of humanity and the environment. Groundwater is the water that soaks into the soil from rain or other precipitation and moves downward to fill cracks and other openings in beds of rocks and sand. This week’s purpose is to educate the public about the importance of groundwater and water well stewardship.

More than 90 percent of all public drinking water systems rely on groundwater to supply the population with drinking water and millions of Americans rely on groundwater from aquifers to supply their private wells, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

CUPHD encourages residents of Champaign County with private wells to test their water annually for contaminants. Private water wells should be tested every year for evidence of coliform bacteria and nitrates, and should be tested more frequently if there are recurrent incidents of gastrointestinal illness or there are changes in taste, odor or appearance.

“Private well water safety is often overlooked by the general public,” said Michael Flanagan, Environmental Health Specialist I at CUPHD. “The water from a homeowner’s private well is not checked by any agency. It is the homeowner’s responsibility to ensure that their drinking water is free of contaminants.”

Private well water test kits are available for \$20 each (within Champaign-Urbana city limits) or \$49 each (elsewhere in Champaign County) at the Environmental Health Division of CUPHD located at 201 West Kenyon Road in Champaign from 8:00 AM – Noon and 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM; Monday through Friday. The kit fee includes sample bottles, instructions and lab testing for coliform bacteria and nitrates. Testing for coliform bacteria will reveal whether your water supply may be contaminated with infectious organisms. Nitrates found in ground water may be produced by agricultural fertilizers, livestock wastes or septic systems.

To ensure a safe water supply, residents are also encouraged to use the following simple guidelines:

- Keep hazardous chemicals, such as paint, fertilizer, pesticides and motor oil far away from the well.
- Maintain a proper separation (at least 50 feet) between the well and private septic systems, kennels, livestock operations and chemical storage areas.
- Seal abandoned water wells.
- Periodically check the well cover or well cap on top of the casing to ensure it is in good repair and securely attached. This seal should keep out insects and rodents. There should be no openings into the cap, except for a factory-installed vent.
- Keep your well records in a safe place. These include construction reports, annual water well system maintenance and water testing results.

For more information on private water wells, please contact CUPHD at (217) 373-7900 or visit CUPHD on the web at www.c-uphd.org.

###