



MADISON COUNTY DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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NEWS Release

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Madison County Awarded CDC Grant to Improve Programs to Reduce Drinking Water Exposures

Madison County Health Department was one out of no more than 20 agencies throughout the nation awarded a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for *Environmental Health Services Support for Public Health Drinking Water Programs to Reduce Drinking Water Exposures*. The grant, in the amount of \$104,700 annually for the next five years, will be used to enhance the Health Department's capacity to assess and manage risks associated with private wells and small drinking water systems.

This grant will assist the Health Department's Individual Water System (IWS) and Environmental Health Capacity Building Initiative to identify and address drinking water contaminants, areas at risk, and to encourage source water protection measures. This initiative will also seek to identify and reduce exposure of small and individual drinking water system users to waterborne contaminants that may adversely affect public health by providing funds to perform water quality analyses of individual well water.

Small drinking water systems and individual residential water supplies (e.g., private wells, spring fed systems, cisterns, bulk water) are not covered under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). As a result, owners of private wells are responsible for ensuring that their water is safe from contaminants. The grant will provide funding for water quality sampling of residential water systems and to provide technical assistance on measures that can help owners protect these water resources.

In Madison County, 32% of the population is served by individual/private water sources, or wells, that are tested infrequently, if at all, and for which there are no regulations in place to monitor water quality. Individual water supplies in Madison County, especially those using shallow dug wells, springs or surface water sources are more likely vulnerable to biological contamination.

Between 2009 and 2012, 40 private wells in Madison County were tested by the Health Department for bacteriological contamination. Although only a limited number of private wells were tested, the results indicated that the water quality in a significant number of wells would not meet drinking water standards.



Various national studies have found unsafe levels of various harmful agents in private wells including: radon, arsenic, uranium, manganese and iron, nitrates/nitrites, and bacteria. Areas of Madison County have already been identified as exhibiting elevated levels of nitrates and arsenic.

The Grant will enable the Madison County Health Department to further identify those areas in the Towns of Madison County most at risk of such contaminants. Establishing baseline water quality data and encouraging source protection measures for private drinking water wells is particularly important for the health of Madison County residents.

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