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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Spring is a good time to have your water well tested**

As spring approaches, it is a good time for water well owners to get their water tested. Many Oklahoma City and Oklahoma County residents get their drinking water from private wells, Oklahoma City-County Health Department officials recommend testing annually. Testing should also be done any time the water system is opened for maintenance or repair.

The Safe Drinking Water Act resulted in the establishment of national standards for drinking water quality. The standards establish limits on the amounts of various substances that can adversely affect human health. These requirements pertain only to public water supplies. People getting their drinking water from a private well are responsible for their own water quality.

Groundwater is the source of water for our water wells in Central Oklahoma. When it rains, some of the water hitting the ground soaks into the soil and slowly percolates downward. The water travels down through the soil until it reaches an impermeable layer and can go no farther. The water collects there and remains underground until it is pumped out or flows out in springs, seeps or streams. Although many people envision groundwater as occurring in lakes or streams, it is most commonly stored below ground in sand, gravel, or porous rock formations called aquifers. Groundwater aquifers occur at varying depths and vary in thickness. The amount and quality of water in different aquifers can vary greatly. This explains why two adjacent wells of different depths can have water of different quality. Water wells in Central Oklahoma range from 15 to 1000 feet deep. Most private wells are in the range of 100 to 200 feet.

The quality of groundwater depends upon the substances dissolved by the water as it percolates through the soil. Water is an excellent solvent and will readily dissolve minerals in the soil and carry them to the various aquifers. It will also carry salts, agricultural chemicals and septic tank discharges. Usually, shallow water contains more of these soil-borne substances than deeper water. The water in aquifers moves very slowly, often only a few feet per year. As a result, the chemical quality of the groundwater at a given point usually changes very slowly.

The appearance, taste, and odor of the water from your well or other groundwater source offer little information about impurities that can be a nuisance or affect the health of your family.

You can see turbid or cloudy water and smell hydrogen sulfide, but your senses will not usually detect contaminants that cause hard water or corrode pipes and stain sinks. No water taken from the environment will be chemically pure; however, most of the chemicals present occur at low, non-harmful levels or may even be beneficial for consumption.

If you are a resident of Oklahoma City or Oklahoma County, the Oklahoma City-County Health Department can help you with testing. If you live in another part of the state, you could contact either the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality or one of the private labs listed in the telephone directory.

You can obtain a test kit for collecting well water samples with instructions on how to make the collection from the Oklahoma City-County Health Department at no charge. The cost for a bacterial test is \$10.00 and takes about 24 hours, while the standard well test costs \$30.00, tests for eight chemicals and normally takes about five to seven working days.

For information water well testing, call 425-4340. For more information on this program and others, call 427-8651 or go the OCCHD website at: <http://www.cchdoc.com>