

Summary: Increasing Private Well Testing

A COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR WATER TESTING LABORATORIES

As a water testing laboratory, you are a key partner in protecting the health of over 43 million people in the United States who get their drinking water from a private well.¹ If you want to expand communication about information private well users are looking for, this toolkit can help.

Why Focus on Private Well Users (PWU)

1. PWU are in every state.

More than **one in eight** people in the United States get their drinking water from a private well.



2. PWU are responsible for testing their well water, but few do.

PWU are responsible for regularly testing their water to ensure it is safe. A 2016 survey of Minnesota PWU found that **less than 20 percent had tested** their well water in the last two years for nitrate or coliform bacteria.²

Why Should Laboratories Care

1. Clear communications with PWU improves customer service.

Clear communications can:

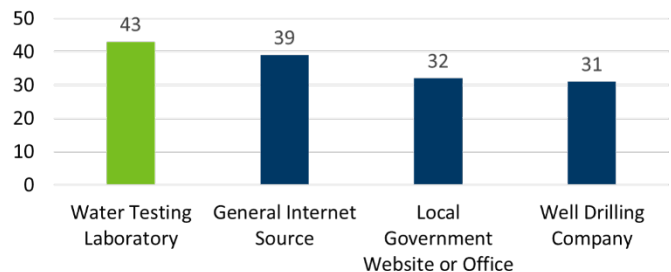
- Help **protect** your customer’s health.
- **Build trust** with your customer – possibly leading to **more business**.



2. Labs are a trusted source of information.

Forty-three percent of PWU look to laboratories for well and water quality information.²

Where do you look for information to help manage the safety and quality of your well water?
(Percent of Respondents)



What is in the Toolkit

The toolkit includes 11 recommendations to strengthen communications with PWU to promote private well testing. Each recommendation includes:

- Why the recommendation is important.
- Ways to implement the recommendation.
- An example of the recommendation in action.

Refer to whichever recommendations seem most helpful for your circumstances.

These recommendations do not supersede any federal or state requirements.

Available at Well Partners
(www.health.state.mn.us/wellpartners)
Click on *Accredited Laboratories*

¹ USGS (2017). *Private Well Use Across the Nation* (https://water.usgs.gov/nawqa/home_maps/private_wells.html).

² Minnesota Department of Health (2016). *Data Driven Outreach for Private Well Users (PDF)* (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/cwf/hhsurveyreport.pdf>).

Recommendations

Become an Accredited Laboratory

Assure private well users and local partners that your laboratory is accountable to national standards and is capable of producing accurate and precise test results. Learn more at [Minnesota Department of Health Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program](http://www.health.state.mn.us/accreditation) (www.health.state.mn.us/accreditation).

Collaborate with State and Local Entities

Messages are more powerful when they are consistent across multiple entities; you may be able to improve your messaging with information or ideas from partners. Partners to consider are departments of health, environment, human services, agriculture, and natural resources; watershed districts; real estate; university extension; and licensed well contractors.

Make Well Testing Information Easy to Find on Your Website

Easy-to-find information will make PWU more likely to select your laboratory for their well water analysis. PWU are more likely to test their well water if the process is easy. Have a tab, button, or webpage specific to PWU and outline contaminants PWU should test for.

Link to Information about Contaminants

Providing information about contaminants will help PWU develop accurate risk perception. Accurate risk perception leads to informed action. Find suggested links for contaminants in the toolkit.

Provide Well Testing Bundles

Bundles make it easier for PWU to know what to test for. Base bundles on testing recommendations or required testing for real estate transactions or maintaining licenses (such as childcare providers).

Remind PWU to Get Their Wells Tested

Use social media, web, radio, newspaper, email, television, letters, postcards, and text messages.

Provide Discounts or Coupons

Incentivizing customers to test their well water on a regular basis may increase your client base.

Provide Local Pickup and Drop-off Options

Local pickup and drop-off options make sampling easier for your customer. Collaborate with local government, libraries, and schools to host sites.

Partner to Host Well Testing Clinics

Clinics make it more convenient for PWU to have their water tested. Plus, face-to-face time gives you an opportunity to build trust. Collaborate with local government and businesses to host an event or include well-test kits at an existing event.

Make Lab Reports, Chain of Custody, and Other Documents Easy to Understand

Best practices include using familiar terms, short sentences, and active voice. Aim for a fifth grade reading level or lower, and put the most important for your customer first.

Promote Holistic Well Safety

Many PWU already look to laboratories for information about well safety. Linking customers to existing well maintenance and water protection resources will build customer satisfaction and help ensure their health (see the toolkit for ideas).

How we Created This Toolkit

- Interviewed 27 laboratories in Minnesota.
- Reviewed several laboratories' existing laboratory reports, info sheets, and websites.
- Researched and applied communications science.
- Five laboratories reviewed the content and provided feedback.

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