

National Drinking Water Week is May 6 – 12, 2012.

Drinking Water Week is celebrated throughout the United States during the first full week of May each year.

This observance provides a great opportunity to review where you get your drinking water from (surface waters and groundwater wells), how to protect your water in your home from lead contamination and how to help protect sources of water supply from contamination, and how you can help use water more efficiently through water conservation.

### **1. Find out about your drinking water.**

About 7.2 million people are served by New Jersey public water systems. Your public water supply is tested for over 90 different contaminants, more than required by the USEPA and in some cases with standards stricter than USEPA's. For example, the federal drinking water standard for arsenic is 10 ppb; the New Jersey standard is 5 ppb, the strictest in the country.

By July 1 each year your public water supplier must send you a "Consumer Confidence Report" describing your water quality from the previous year. Water suppliers serving more than 100,000 residents also post their consumer confidence reports on the web.

For New Jersey residents who obtain their drinking water from a private well (about 400,000 households), there is no requirement for routine testing; however, the NJDEP recommends that you test your drinking water regularly. If you are buying or selling property in New Jersey, the Private Well Testing Act requires that the private well on the property be tested before sale.

For more information about the following topics, visit these websites:

- Drinking water standards ([www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/dw\\_standards\\_2\\_2005.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/dw_standards_2_2005.pdf) and [www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/stdsdwfaq.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/stdsdwfaq.pdf))
- Consumer Confidence Reports for large New Jersey utilities (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/ogwdw/ccr.nsf/New+Jersey?OpenView>)
- Private Well Testing Act ([www.nj.gov/dep/pwta/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/pwta/))

### **2. Limit lead in drinking water.**

Although there are other sources of lead in the environment, drinking water can also be a source. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires drinking water systems to monitor drinking water at customer taps because household plumbing materials can be a source of lead (and copper), especially in housing built prior to the 1986 ban on the use of lead solder. Exposure to elevated levels of lead and copper may cause health problems ranging from stomach distress to brain damage. If lead concentrations exceed an action level of 15 parts per billion or copper concentrations exceed an action level of 1.3 parts per million in more than 10% of customer taps sampled, the system must take several actions to control corrosion, because water with high acidity can increase the amount of lead dissolved from household plumbing. If the lead level in the water is over the action level, the water system must also inform the public about steps they should take to protect their health, and it may have to replace lead service lines under their control. If your drinking water system does have elevated levels of lead (find out here: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/ogwdw/ccr.nsf/New+Jersey?OpenView>), you can minimize your

family's exposure by running the water for up to 30 seconds before using it, if it has been sitting for more than six hours. For other steps, see [www.nj.gov/health/eoh/hhazweb/lead.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/health/eoh/hhazweb/lead.pdf).

### **3. Protect sources of drinking water.**

Drinking water comes from surface waters or groundwater wells. The quality of these sources of drinking water determines the amount of treatment needed to make the water safe to drink. Some contaminants in water are naturally occurring (iron, manganese), but many are from human activities. Here are just a few ways you and others can help ensure clean and plentiful water for New Jersey – now and in the future. In your home, you can:

- Dispose of waste properly. Some materials such as motor oil, paint, flea collars, and household cleaners have the potential to contaminate source water. Contact your local Department of Public Works for proper household hazardous waste disposal.
- Limit your use of fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides.

Here are some actions that utility officials, municipal and county officials, and local and county planners can take, which you can help encourage and support:

- Manage and work with owners of existing potential contaminant sources to minimize potential contamination.
- Establish regulations prohibiting or restricting certain activities or land uses within the source water assessment area. Take appropriate enforcement action when necessary.
- Update municipal master plans to ensure greater protection.
- Purchase lands or create conservation easements within the source water assessment area.

### **4. Increase water conservation.**

Despite an average rainfall of 45 inches per year, periodic droughts and more-common seasonal water shortages occur in New Jersey (see <http://www.njdrought.org/> for current drought information). Inefficient use of water during the peak demand summer months combined with New Jersey's continued population growth have further constrained our water resources. Promoting the efficient use of water will help us meet the water supply demands of the future. In addition, water conservation can help consumers save money on utility bills, help minimize water pollution in nearby lakes, rivers, and local watersheds, along with helping to prevent or postpone the need to fund and build new or expanded sources of water supply.

For tips on how you can help conserve water please visit <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/conserve.htm>.

General Information:

For more information about New Jersey's drinking water program, please visit our website at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/>.

The USEPA has posted information on National Drinking Water Week at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/>