Experts encourage private well maintenance

Oberlin, Kan. – Every day, we brush our teeth, cook, wash clothes, shower, bathe and flush the toilet. However, do you really KNOW YOUR WATER? For most of us, we take water quantity and quality for granted. If you live in a community provided with a public water supply, the water is safe and regulated by the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act. If you have your own private well, the burden falls on you for water quality protection and maintenance of the private well. "A private well that has been constructed properly and maintained can provide years of service," said Stacie Minson, an extension watershed specialist with Kansas State University. According to Minson, spring is the perfect opportunity to schedule your annual private water well check-up.

Here are some suggestions to help you protect and KNOW YOUR WATER:
Annual well maintenance should include:
1. Check the well casing for cracks or leaks.
2. Check the well cap for water tightness.
3. Ensure that ground surface slopes away from the well for 15 feet in all directions.
4. Complete shock chlorination of the well and water system.
5. Test water for total coliform bacteria, *E.coli,* nitrate, and nuisance contaminants (pH, hardness, iron, manganese, and total dissolved solids).

Suggested well maintenance and protection should include:
1. Work with a licensed or certified well driller if repairs to the well or well casing are necessary. Be sure well meets all current construction standards.
2. Find and fix the cause of any change in water's color, taste or odor. Shock chlorinate the well if necessary.
3. Maintain at least 50 feet (100 feet preferred) of open space between the well and any buildings, septic/waste system, parked vehicle, equipment, compost or other contamination source.
4. Store chemicals such as fertilizer, pesticides, oils, fuel or paint at least 100 feet down slope from the private well.
5. Properly plug all abandoned wells and other holes not used in the last two years. Plug all cesspools and septic tanks.
6. Prevent backflow and back-siphonage by maintaining an air gap above the container you are filling, or by using an adequate backflow prevention device.
7. Shock chlorinate the well after any service work on the pump, well, or water system.
8. Place all well testing and records in one place for future reference.

"These steps might seem like a lot to remember, so I encourage people to set a reminder on your phone for your well maintenance and to make it easy to Know Your Water," said Minson.

For those with questions on private wells, contact a local K-State Research and Extension Office. There are new water publications available to help guide the public through their well maintenance: *Testing Private Water Systems*, *Private Well Maintenance and Protection,* and *Private Wells' Safe Location*.

Your local Health Department or Environmental Office may also be able to answer questions. All of these agencies may have water test kits available and could even assist in sending samples off to a private lab. In addition, residents can find additional information by visiting https://www.epa.gov/privatewells.

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program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu

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