

**Jefferson County****Public Health**
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Central Oregon Public Health Monthly Update

February 28, 2025

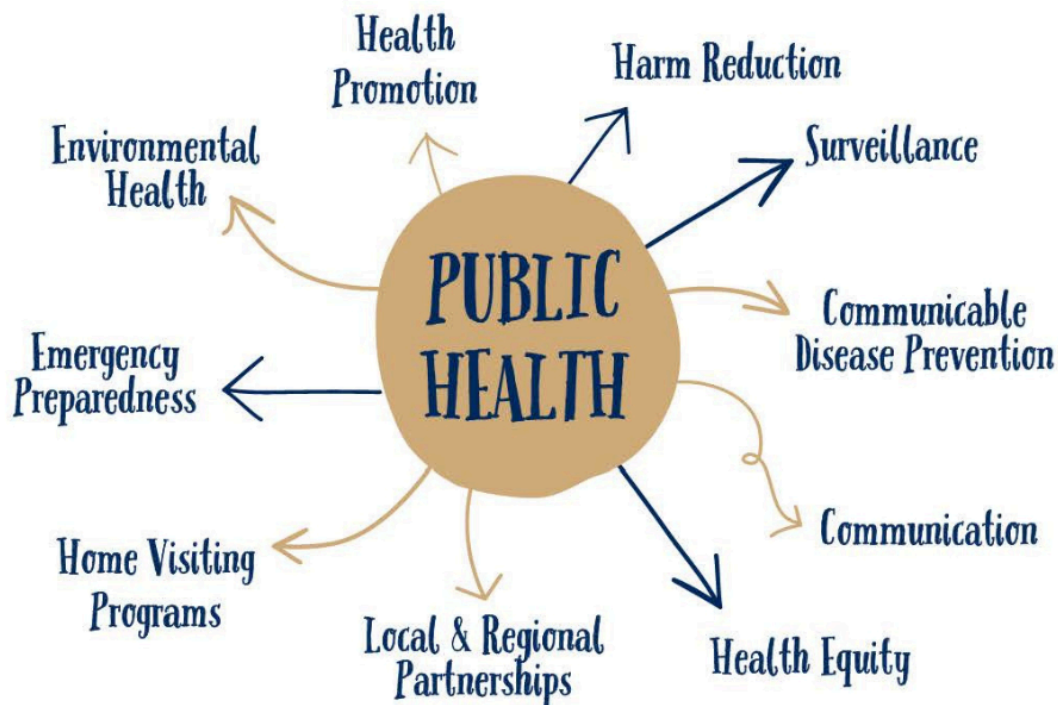
The Central Oregon Public Health Newsletter is now available in Spanish!

To receive it in your mailbox click [here](#).

Usted puede encontrar el boletín de este mes en español [aquí](#)!

What is Public Health?

Public Health focuses on protecting and improving the health of entire populations – whether for the country, state, county, or community. Public Health often functions as a “safety net” for community members who are unable to access health resources elsewhere. The work of public health is conducted at many levels – in the federal government as the National Institute of Health, Centers for Disease Control, and others, at a state-level, as the Oregon Health Authority, and at a local level at Deschutes County Public Health, Crook County Public Health, and Jefferson County Public Health. Local organizations also help improve public health by engaging and educating the community in healthy lifestyles and behaviors and helping community members access health services.



At your local public health departments, we work to prevent diseases, promote healthy lifestyles, and respond to health emergencies in a number of ways. These programs are made possible with investments from federal, state and local sources. We want to take the opportunity to share that all local public health departments in Central Oregon continue to provide services to ensure a healthy population. Here are things we do and how you can access these services:

Clinical Services. Communicable Disease (CD), Reproductive Health (RH) and Immunization Programs work to reduce the risk of infectious diseases and provide clinical preventative services. CD Programs track infectious diseases and notify people who have been exposed. These clinical programs also ensure access to immunizations, HIV, STI and reproductive health services, including testing and treatment.

Emergency Preparedness (EP). works closely with emergency management teams across all sectors to ensure the region is prepared for emergencies. The EP program is ready to respond to and recover from all public health emergencies, such as major disasters or biological threats, wildfire smoke, extreme weather events, and more.

Environmental Health (EH) Programs improve access to safe food, water, clean air, and provide resources to support disease. EH inspects and licenses food establishments, helps keep drinking water safe, conducts vector control, and monitors safe indoor and outdoor environments.

Epidemiology. Epidemiologists support numerous programs by tracking and analyzing health data. This data helps programs understand critical health situations in the community and helps determine the most effective ways to address the issues.

Pregnancy and Parenting. These programs provide a number of supports to pregnant people and families with babies and children up to age 21. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is a federally funded program that helps pregnant women, new mothers, and young children eat well, learn about nutrition, and stay healthy by providing nutritious foods and help accessing healthcare. Other Pregnancy and Parenting services include development screenings, nurse home visits, breastfeeding support, care coordination for children and youth with special health needs, access and enrollment into programs and resources for pregnant and post-partum individuals, parent education and coaching, links to community resources and more.

Prevention and Health Promotion Programs (PHP) focus on keeping the community safe through prevention education and health promotion to support healthy behaviors and environments. Local PHP programs focus on Substance Misuse Prevention, Drug Overdose Prevention, Problem Gambling Prevention, Adolescent and School Health, Tobacco Prevention and Cessation, Mental Health Promotion, Suicide Prevention, School Based Health Centers and Youth Engagement.

As always, we are committed to keeping our community safe and ensuring access to health services for all community members. For any questions about our services and how to access them, please reach out to your local public health department.

Crook County Public Health: (541) 447-5165

Deschutes County Public Health: (541) 322-7400

Jefferson County Public Health: (541) 475-4456

Safe Firearm Storage

Firearm-related suicides in Central Oregon are higher than state and national averages. One of the most effective ways to prevent these tragedies is by securely storing firearms. Keeping firearms locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition can save lives by reducing access during moments of crisis.

To promote secure storage practices, the Central Oregon Suicide Prevention Alliance (COSPA) has partnered with firearm owners, law enforcement, veterans, and retailers to develop a regional campaign and website. These resources, available in English and Spanish, provide practical guidance on reducing risk and protecting loved ones.

If you own a firearm or live in a home with firearms, taking steps to store them securely is a simple yet powerful way to prevent harm. To learn more, watch the PSAs, and access additional resources at SafeFirearmStorage.com.

Together, we can help protect our community and save lives.



www.safefirearmstorage.com

Secure Firearm Storage Informational Guide

Creating time & distance between a person and a lethal mean saves lives.

What is Secure Firearm Storage?

Secure firearm storage refers to safely storing a firearm and ammunition in order to lower injury and death.

There are many ways firearm owners can increase safety within their home and community.





How Lethal Means Secure Storage Works

It is an intentional and voluntary practice to increase time and distance between a person and a lethal means.

It helps reduce risk of intentional harm, like suicide, and accidental harm (injury or death). Statistics show making lethal means less accessible reduces suicide by 91%.

Everyone Can Help Save a Life

Asking someone about suicide does not increase risk, but helps the person become more supported and less alone.

There are plenty of options and securely storing works when it comes to suicide prevention.



To learn more, go to www.safefirearmstorage.com

National Groundwater Awareness Week



NATIONAL GROUNDWATER AWARENESS WEEK

March 9-15, 2025



National Groundwater Awareness Week is March 9-15, 2025. Now in its 26th year, **National Groundwater Awareness Week** is an annual week of education and advocacy focusing on one of the nation's most precious resources. According to the CDC, an estimated 164 million Americans, about one third of our nation's residents, get their tap water from a groundwater source and about 43 million people in the US get their water from private groundwater wells. Because private wells are not subject to EPA regulations including routine testing and maintenance, homeowners on wells should take steps to protect their water from contaminants and test it routinely.

Groundwater in Oregon

In Oregon, 90% of public water systems utilize ground water exclusively and approximately 400,000 (23%) of Oregonians rely on water from 350,000 private wells.

Oregonians are only required to test their well water when selling a property with a well. There are no additional testing or maintenance requirements for private wells. To address this gap, Deschutes County launched its Private Well Awareness Program in the spring of 2022 with the goal of increasing knowledge about drinking water safety among the public.

Deschutes County Environmental Health staff were able to sample 170 private wells (approximately 1% of the County's 17,000 private wells) for an indicator bacteria and nitrates between June 2022 and June 2024. An intern from the OSU School of Environmental and Occupational Health developed educational materials and assisted with initial sampling. An intern from NEHA's **National Environmental Health Internship Program (NEHIP)** joined the effort during the second year. In addition to collecting the remaining water samples, she developed a follow-up survey to assess participants' perceptions and needs before and after the project. The program was very well received, and participants reported an increase in knowledge and awareness of their private well water source. A link to the survey can be found [here](#).



Kiana Porter, 2024 NEPHIP Intern, labeling a drinking water sample bottle as part of Deschutes County's Private Well Awareness Program.

Results from the Private Well Awareness Program

Previous testing in Oregon has shown that approximately 20% of private wells test positive for coliform bacteria. Coliform bacteria serve as an indicator of potential contamination, helping to determine whether a water source is safe for drinking. In Deschutes County, our data showed that only 8.8% of sampled private wells tested positive for coliforms, with just one well testing positive for *E. coli*, a bacteria that can pose a more immediate health risk.

Additionally, six wells had nitrate levels exceeding 5 mg/L, but none exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 mg/L. The MCL is the highest concentration of a contaminant allowed in drinking water under federal regulations, established to protect public health. Nitrate levels above 10 mg/L can be particularly harmful to infants and pregnant individuals, increasing the risk of conditions such as methemoglobinemia, or "blue baby syndrome," which affects the ability of blood to carry oxygen.

What's Next?

Deschutes County Environmental Health is still accepting requests from homeowners who would like to have their well water sampled and learn more about safe drinking water. We hope to onboard a third intern in the summer of 2025 to continue sampling the groundwater wells of homeowners in Deschutes County and providing this valuable service to the community.

We plan on using GIS mapping to visualize water quality data and well locations, enabling comparisons with other regions and identifying areas with elevated results. Mapping can also help pinpoint geographic areas that were underrepresented in the project, supporting efforts to increase future participation in those locations.

How can you find out where your drinking water comes from?

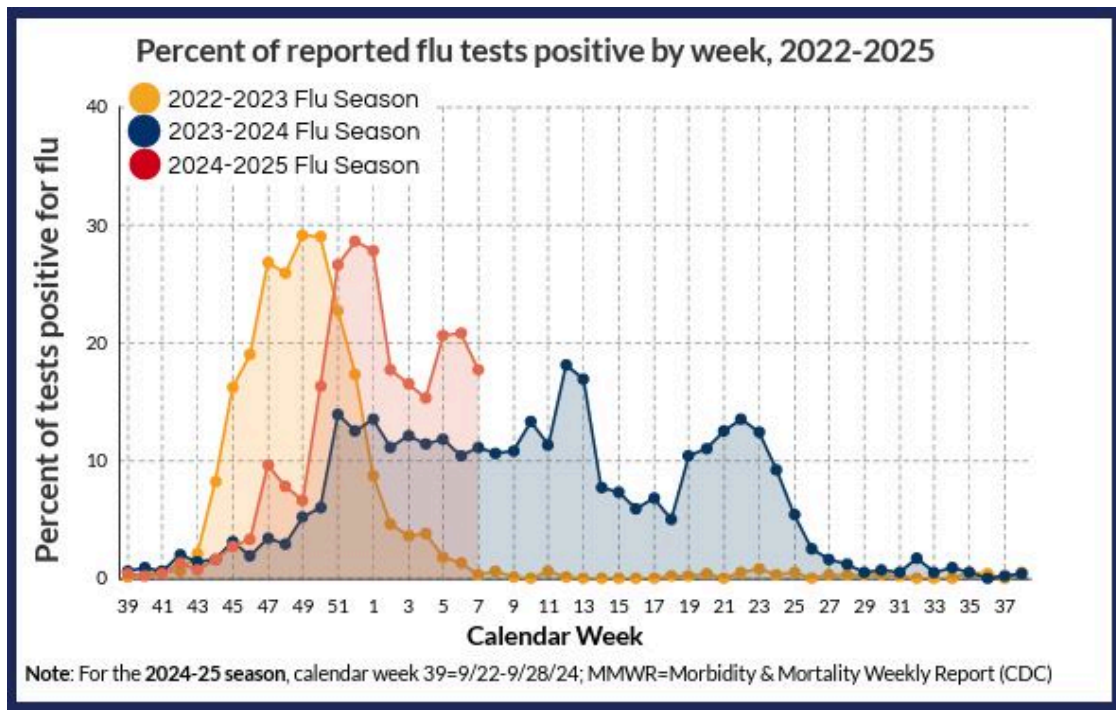
There are a few simple things you can do to learn more about what comes out of your tap. First, think about whether you (or your landlord) pay a water bill. If you do pay a water bill, chances are that you are part of a water system and you do NOT have a private well. Some drinking water systems get water from groundwater sources. Find out more about your drinking water system on [EPA's Safe Drinking Water Information System \(SDWIS\)](#). By using the [SDWIS Search](#), you can locate your drinking water supplier and view its contact information, history, and water quality results."

If you do not pay a water bill, it could be that water from a private drinking water well is coming out of your tap! This is particularly likely if you live in a

rural area. Check whether your property has a private drinking water well by looking it up on Deschutes Dial, here: [Dial - Deschutes County Property Information](#).

If you get your drinking water from a private well and have questions about drinking water safety, you may be interested in resources from [PrivateWellClass.org](#), a project of the Illinois State Water Survey that serves homeowners throughout the United States. You are also welcome to visit Deschutes County Environmental Health's Safe Water page at [Safe Water | Deschutes County Oregon](#). If you have a private well in Deschutes County and have questions about your well or wish to be placed on the interest list for private drinking water well testing, please contact DCEH at 541-317-3114 to speak with an Environmental Health Specialist.

Respiratory Illness Surveillance Report



Visit our [website](#) for our latest respiratory reports

Health Services hosts numerous classes and special events each month!

For details about these events and any updates please visit our [Health Services Calendar](#).

Public Health Resources:

- Central Oregon public health web resources:
 - [Crook County](#)

- [Deschutes County](#)
- [Jefferson County](#)

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