



OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY
Center for Health Protection

Kate Brown, Governor

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Memorandum

To: The Honorable Representative
Ken Helm, Chair, House Committee on
Water

From: Angela Allbee, Senior Policy Advisor
External Relations Division
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Date: February 6, 2020

Subject: HB 4077 – Follow-up Information

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide information in follow up to the Committee's February 6, 2020 public hearing for HB 4077 that would amend the Domestic Well Testing Act (DWTA) (ORS 448.271). OHA's Domestic Well Safety Program relies on education and outreach to encourage well stewardship by property owners who rely on private wells for drinking water. While many wells in Oregon provide clean water for many people, some wells are contaminated due to natural and un-natural causes. This contamination can cause both short and long-term health effects.

Oregon well owners are required by law to test their wells only when selling a property where a domestic well is located and to report results to OHA. OHA compares the data against health screening values for arsenic, nitrates, and bacteria (coliform and e coli). Otherwise, there are no requirements that domestic well water be tested or meet any drinking water standards.

How does (OHA) know it receives only 20% of test reports?

OHA has heard this anecdotally from an environmental laboratory representative who serves on OHA's Oregon Drinking Water Advisory Committee.

What does OHA do with DWTA data?

OHA uses the DWTA data, plus domestic well data from Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to conduct hazard analyses to find geographic areas with bacteria, arsenic or nitrates. This allows OHA to better tailor our outreach and education regarding domestic well safety.

How much data does OHA use that comes directly from well testers or environmental labs?

Currently OHA receives no test results from well testers or labs. OHA receives domestic well testing data at the time of a real estate transfer if it's sent to us by property sellers or their realtors.

What is the public good related to collecting and using DWTA data?

DWTA data is used to identify potentially significant levels of bacteria, nitrates or arsenic. These indications are sufficient for OHA to target our voluntary program of outreach and education and to help DEQ focus local and regional groundwater studies.

OHA would be happy to provide additional information upon request.

