

HB 3525 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Action Date: 04/09/25

Action: Without recommendation as to passage, with amendments, and be referred to Rules.
(Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 9-0-0-0

Yeas: 9 - Boice, Hartman, Helm, Levy B, Marsh, McDonald, McLain, Owens, Scharf

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/17, 4/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure requires landlords to collect and test samples of drinking water for certain contaminants if the dwelling unit has one or more exempt wells as a source of drinking water, requires landlords to provide test results to the tenant and to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), and establishes requirements for associated testing laboratories and the OHA.

Detailed Summary

Defines 'contaminants' to include arsenic, coliform bacteria, lead, and nitrates. Defines 'exempt well' as wells exempt for the purpose of watering a lawn or noncommercial garden smaller than one-half acre or for single or group domestic purposes.

Landlords of a dwelling unit that has one or more exempt wells as a source of drinking water (qualifying landlords) **must**

- collect and test samples of drinking water for the unit.
- collect water samples from a dwelling unit's primary faucet.
- ensure that drinking water sources are tested as follows:
 - no later than 30 days after well installation for arsenic
 - at least once a year for each contaminant, except under certain conditions
- inform a laboratory that testing is required under this Act and request test results to be submitted to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) when submitting samples to a laboratory for testing
- provide test results in a specified form to the tenant within 30 days of receipt
- prior to entering into a rental agreement for a dwelling unit subject to testing, requires landlord to provide written notice to tenant of (1) the presence of an exempt well as drinking water source, (2) the dates and results of most recent contaminant tests, or a statement that such tests have not yet been performed, and (3) the latest date by which the next test must be conducted.

Qualifying landlords **may**

- collect supplementary samples of water from a dwelling unit's other faucets of drinking water or from a dwelling unit's well head.
- delegate duties to collect drinking water samples to a tenant if both parties agree in writing and the agreement is made in good faith and for adequate consideration.

A **laboratory conducting a test** of drinking water as requested by a tenant or landlord **must**

- be accredited under the environmental laboratory accreditation program.
- report test results to OHA electronically in a format prescribed by OHA.
- send the full laboratory report to the landlord, and if requested, to the tenant, in a specified manner.

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

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If **contamination levels exceed the maximum limits** established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, qualifying landlords **must**

- as soon as practicable, provide test results to the tenant.
- provide the tenant with an informational handout on drinking water contaminant testing and the impact contaminated drinking water can have on health as developed by OHA.
- retest the well according to a schedule established by OHA.

OHA must

- adopt rules to implement the measure, including the content of
 - a specific form used by the landlord to provide test results
 - handouts providing information on testing drinking water for contaminants and the potential impact of such contaminants on a person's health.

Specifies that no testing has to be performed for dwelling units that are part of a premises regulated under public water system statutes. Becomes operative on June 1, 2026, and specifies that between January 1, 2026, and the operative date, landlords subject to the testing requirements must sample and test for all contaminants.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Reason for moving the measure to the House Committee on Rules with the adoption of the amendment
- Need for continued conversation
- Impacts on available housing supply
- Technical error in the amendment

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment modifies requirements for testing exempt wells for specified contaminants.

BACKGROUND:

If ground water becomes polluted through processes like microbial contamination, high concentrations of naturally occurring contaminants, local land use practices, or problems with the integrity of nearby on-site septic systems, it is no longer safe to drink. The Domestic Well Testing Act (ORS 448.271) applies to the sale or exchange of real estate with a domestic well, which is defined as being used for purposes like drinking, cooking, washing, or bathing. Under current law, samples must be tested by an accredited laboratory for arsenic, nitrate, and E. coli bacteria, and test results must be submitted to the Oregon Health Authority. Oregon does not currently have a statewide database of domestic well testing results.