County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION
701 Ocean Street room 312, Santa Cruz, CA, 95060
Phone:(831) 454-2022 Fax:(831) 454-4770

Time of Sale Flow Testing & Water Quality Sampling
Frequently Asked Questions

What are the requirements of the new Time of Sale program?

In 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved changes to the Santa Cruz County Code governing Individual Water Systems (IWSs). Sellers of real property that receive potable (drinking) water from an individual water system, such as a domestic well, spring, or stream diversion, must now complete water quality and yield testing before a property transfer. Wells or diversions that are used solely for irrigation or other non-potable uses are exempt.

I'm thinking of selling my home, when should I have the IWS tested?

As it can take several weeks to schedule, conduct the yield and water quality testing, and receive the water quality results from the lab, we recommend having the testing done as soon as you decide you will put your property on the market. A free well water quality testing program is offered on the Central Coast, though it can take over 8 weeks to schedule a sampling and receive results. For those planning ahead, they can sign up here: https://sites.google.com/view/ccgroundwater.

Which Companies offer these services?

The Environmental Health Division maintains this list as a reference and does not recommend any specific contractor, listed or unlisted.
https://scceh.com/Portals/6/Env_Health/Land%20Use/Land%20Use%20Documents/2025/WaterWellPumpContractorsandDrillers.pdf

Environmental Health also maintains a list of accredited Water Testing Laboratories on our website:
https://scceh.com/Portals/6/ELAP%20Certified%20Laboratory%20List_2024-08-14.pdf.

The State Water Resources Control Board allows you to search accredited laboratories by address at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/labs/

What are the expected costs for the yield tests?

- 3-Hour Flow Test: **$600–$1,000**
- Extended Tests: Additional $165–$185 per hour
- Advanced or Comprehensive Testing: Optional but encouraged by the County in areas of low yield; costs typically range from $1,000 to $10,000

Which tests are required for the water quality analysis?

- Bacteriological analysis for total coliform organisms (presence/absence)
- Most of the Title-22 Inorganics Primary Contaminants List: Aluminum, Antimony, Arsenic, Barium, Beryllium, Cadmium, Chloride**, Total Chromium, Hexavalent Chromium*, Conductivity**, Fluoride, Iron, Manganese, Mercury, Nickel, Nitrate, Nitrite, Selenium, Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)**, Thallium. Ref 7.73.070 (B)
- *Hexavalent Chromium testing is required if well is located South of Valencia Creek
- ** Chloride, Conductivity, and TDS are required for wells in the Coastal Zone and when requested by the County due to known water quality risks.
- Additional analyses including Aggressivity, Alkalinity, Bicarbonate, Bromide, Calcium, Carbonate, Color, Copper Hardness, Hydroxide, Langelier Index, Lead, Magnesium, MBAS (Surfactants), Odor pH, Potassium, Silver, Sulfate, Sodium, Turbidity, and Zinc are often included by labs as part of a Title-22 Inorganics panel, and are strongly recommended as indicators of well maintenance requirements, but are not required.
- Note: Perchlorate, Cyanide, and Asbestos are required for public water systems under the Title-22 Inorganics List. However, those contaminants have historically had few exceedances throughout the County, making it very unlikely that they will be detected in levels above standards, and thus they are waived for IWS at time of sale.

My home is on a spring, is testing still required?

Yes, testing is required for any property served by an IWS regardless of whether it is a traditional well, a horizontal well, a spring, or a stream diversion.

My IWS was tested recently, do I need to test it again?

As long as the testing was consistent with code requirements, test results less than three (3) years old will be accepted.

Where should the water sample be taken?

The sample should be taken directly from the source (well, spring box, diversion).

My property is served by multiple sources, do I need to test them all?

Yes, testing is required for any active sources serving potable (drinking) water to the property. Wells, springs, or surface diversions used solely for irrigation are exempt. Inactive wells should be destroyed under permit to protect groundwater quality.

What does "non-standard water quality recorded on deed" mean?

When a well or spring box is installed to serve water for domestic uses, it is required to be tested for certain contaminants. If contaminants are found above standards, that information may be recorded on the deed to ensure that future owners are aware of it. Absence of a deed recordation does not mean that the water quality is good, as testing requirements have evolved over time, and water quality may have changed.

What are the costs for the water quality analysis?

- Monterey Bay Analytical Services:
  -Bacteria Testing: $28 (contractors typically charge $150–$200)
  -Inorganics Panel: $270 (contractors typically charge $500-$700)
  -Hexavalent Chromium: $95
- Some contractors quoted higher rates for water quality testing (up to $500 for bacteria & $1,000 for Title 22)
- Why the markup? Contractors generally increase lab costs to cover the full scope of services, including sample collection and delivery, coordination with real estate agents and property owners, and handling time-sensitive requests. They also have limited control over lab processing times, which can vary

- Approximate Total (including markup): **Total: $650 - $900**

What is the average timeline for this work to be completed?

- Scheduling: 1–2 weeks from initial call to the flow test.
- Water Quality Results: An additional 2–3 weeks for Title 22 testing (extended due to lab availability). Total time from initial contact to final results can be **3–5 weeks**

Once the tests are completed, what do I need to do?

To ensure compliance, the completed disclosure form "Water Source Evaluation upon Transfer of Property" and laboratory report must be provided to the property buyer, and submitted to the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division via email at ENVPointofsale@santacruzcountyca.gov.