



State of California
Office of the Attorney General

ROB BONTA
ATTORNEY GENERAL

March 12, 2026

RE: Assembly Bill 2454 – Drinking Water Well Testing Requirements for Rental Housing

Dear Landlords and Tenants with Private Drinking Water Wells:

I am issuing this enforcement advisory to remind landlords with drinking water wells on their properties of the requirements established under Assembly Bill 2454 (2024) (“AB 2454”), codified in Health and Safety Code section 116688, and to help tenants understand their rights. As the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of California, I have broad authority to enforce California laws, including AB 2454. The text of AB 2454 is located at: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB2454.

AB 2454 applies to landlords that own properties with private drinking water wells, which are also known as “domestic wells,” if they are eligible for free well testing programs established or funded by the California State Water Resources Control Board (“State Water Board”) or a Regional Water Quality Control Board (“Regional Water Board”).¹ AB 2454 requires landlords with wells to participate in free programs for well testing that are available in their region and, where applicable, provide tenants with access to safe drinking water. The State Water Board’s 2025 Drinking Water Needs Assessment found that nearly one-third of private wells are at risk of violating drinking water standards.² The State Water Board and Regional Water Boards provide no-cost domestic well testing and programs to provide safe drinking water in certain areas with significant water contamination, particularly in the Central Valley. AB 2454 requires landlords with a well serving a rental property to take part in these free testing and water provision efforts, allowing tenants to benefit from these programs. Tenants may be eligible for free replacement drinking water or other programs that provide clean drinking water if their well is found to be contaminated beyond safe standards, known as “primary drinking water standards.”³

It is important for landlords with private wells in the relevant areas to participate in these testing programs. Failure to comply with AB 2454 is a violation of California’s Unfair Competition Law, Business and Professions Code section 17200, and potentially other laws. Accordingly, my Office may bring an enforcement action if there is a failure to comply with AB 2454 that seeks civil penalties, restitution, injunctive relief, and other available remedies.⁴

I. IMPORTANCE OF WELL TESTING

AB 2454 applies to rental properties served by domestic wells.⁵ A “domestic well” refers to any groundwater well that supplies a residence with drinking water and has up to four connections.⁶ Domestic wells are usually located in rural areas.⁷ Historically, these wells have not been subject to state regulatory oversight, resulting in residents often drinking untested water. The Central Valley and Central Coast regions are significantly impacted by groundwater contamination, with the Water Board identifying the counties of Fresno, San Joaquin, Sonoma, and Tulare as having the greatest number of domestic wells with water quality risks.⁸

The primary contaminants identified in domestic wells include contaminants that are regulated for municipal water sources because of their health risks, including nitrate (which can cause thyroid damage, and reproductive and developmental effects⁹), arsenic (cancer¹⁰), 1,2,3-trichloropropane (cancer¹¹), gross alpha (cancer¹²), uranium (kidney disease¹³), and hexavalent chromium (cancer).¹⁴ Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately exposed to drinking water contaminated with nitrate and other contaminants.¹⁵ For example, in California’s San Joaquin Valley, renters and Latino families are more likely than other populations to use water sources contaminated with nitrate.¹⁶ For migrant farmworkers in particular, lack of access to safe drinking water compounds other health hazards such as substandard housing and exposure to pesticides in fields.¹⁷

II. FREE WELL TESTING PROGRAMS

AB 2454 applies to rental properties eligible for free well testing programs administered, established, or funded by the State Water Board or a Regional Water Board.¹⁸ The State Water Board’s [website for AB 2454](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/private-domestic-well-testing.html), found at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/private-domestic-well-testing.html, includes a map and directory of the programs available to landlords and renters in their neighborhoods. These well testing programs are run by government agencies and/or nonprofit organizations. The services offered by each program vary: some of the programs provide only well water testing services; others provide interim drinking water replacement services (bottled water, hauled water, point-of-use filtration systems, water refill station kiosks); some provide well maintenance and repair options; and several provide a combination of these services. Contact information and details about these programs are available in the Testing Program Directory on the State Water Board’s website.

III. IF ELIGIBLE, LANDLORDS MUST PARTICIPATE IN FREE WELL TESTING AND PROVIDE SAFE DRINKING WATER TO TENANTS OR FACE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

Landlords with wells *must* test their wells if they are eligible for a free program established or paid for by the State Water Board or a Regional Water Board and the program has capacity.¹⁹ To check eligibility, landlords should consult the above State Water Board website, which includes a regularly updated directory. Landlords must request well tests for all drinking water contaminants covered by the applicable free program²⁰ and must request testing as frequently as recommended by the program.²¹ As part of this testing, landlords must consent to the testing laboratory submitting results to the State Water Board and/or local agencies.²² Landlords are *not* required to participate in multiple testing programs if more than one is available—participation in a single program at a time is sufficient to comply with AB 2454.²³ If a tenant is eligible for a

free testing program but the landlord is not, the landlord must participate in the testing program on the tenant's behalf, as long as this is allowed by the testing program.²⁴

After receiving test results for a well, landlords must share the results with current residents within 10 days.²⁵ The landlord must also provide the tenant with the information posted on the [State Water Board's website](#) regarding how to read and understand the results.²⁶

It should be noted that AB 2454 requires landlords to participate in free domestic well testing programs and creates no requirement to pay for well testing. If testing reveals water contamination that exceeds safe levels, landlords must participate in a free program, if one is available, to provide safe drinking water to tenants, including, for example, a program that supplies bottled water, removes contaminants from water, or connects wells to other water sources with safe drinking water. These programs are posted on the [State Water Board's website](#).

Violating AB 2454 can lead to State Water Board orders or fines of up to \$1,000 per day for each day the violation occurred.²⁷ Further enforcement actions by the Attorney General or other law enforcement agencies with authority under California's Unfair Competition Law may result in court injunctions, restitution, and/or civil penalties of up to \$2,500 for each violation.²⁸

IV. TENANT RIGHTS

Tenants that rely on domestic drinking water wells located in areas served by a free program may remind their landlords of landlords' obligation to participate in applicable free testing and clean drinking water programs discussed in this advisory. AB 2454 prohibits landlords from imposing any charge, fee, or rent increase on a tenant as a result of the requirements of this law.²⁹ Landlords are further prohibited from retaliating against tenants for requesting testing or participation in safe drinking water programs.³⁰

Tenants are encouraged to review the [Attorney General's webpage on Landlord-Tenant Issues](#),³¹ which further describes tenants' protections against retaliation and discrimination.

V. CONCLUSION

I urge landlords with drinking water wells on their properties to follow the law and test their wells if there is a free testing or other program to provide safe drinking water available in their area. I have made it a priority as California's Attorney General to protect public health and the environment from the threat of water contamination, and I consider AB 2454 an important tool for advancing that priority. I encourage the public to contact my Office's Bureau of Environmental Justice at EJ@doj.ca.gov to report any known violations of this law.

Sincerely,



ROB BONTA
Attorney General

Citations

¹ Cal. Health & Safety Code § 116688(a); California State Water Resources Control Board (“State Water Board”), *State and Regional Water Boards*, https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterboards_map.html.

² State Water Board, *Fact Sheet: 2025 SAFER Drinking Water Needs Assessment* (June 2025), https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025/2025-needs-factsheet.pdf, at 2.

³ Cal. Health & Safety Code §§ 116688(e), 116275(c).

⁴ See e.g., Cal. Business & Professions Code §§ 17203, 17206.

⁵ Cal. Health & Safety Code § 116688(b)(1).

⁶ *Id.* § 116681(i).

⁷ State Water Board, *A Guide for Private Domestic Well Owners* (June 2025), https://waterboards.ca.gov/gama/docs/wellowner_guide.pdf, at 8.

⁸ State Water Board, *2025 Drinking Water Needs Assessment* (June 2025), https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/documents/needs/2025needsassessment.pdf, at 104.

⁹ Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (“OEHHA”), *Public Health Goal for Nitrate and Nitrite in Drinking Water* (May 2018),

<https://oehha.ca.gov/sites/default/files/media/downloads/water/chemicals/phg/nitratephg051118.pdf>, at 6.

¹⁰ OEHHA, *Public Health Goal for Arsenic* (April 2004), <https://oehha.ca.gov/sites/default/files/media/downloads/water/chemicals/arsenicfinalphgfacts.pdf>, at 1.

¹¹ OEHHA, *1,2,3-Trichloropropane* (2009), <https://oehha.ca.gov/chemicals/123-trichloropropane>.

¹² OEHHA, *Health-Protective Considerations Regarding Measurement of Gross Alpha Particle Activity in Drinking Water* (December 2003),

<https://oehha.ca.gov/sites/default/files/media/downloads/water/chemicals/phg/grossalphahealth.pdf>, at 2.

¹³ OEHHA, *Public Health Goals for Chemicals in Drinking Water: Uranium* (August 2001), <https://oehha.ca.gov/sites/default/files/media/downloads/water/chemicals/phg/uranium801.pdf>, at 8.

¹⁴ OEHHA, *Chromium-hexavalent* (2010), <https://oehha.ca.gov/chemicals/chromium-hexavalent>.

¹⁵ Laurel A. Schaidler et al., *Environmental Justice and Drinking Water Quality: Are There Socioeconomic Disparities in Nitrate Levels in U.S. Drinking Water?*, 18 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, 3 (2019).

¹⁶ Carolina Balazs et al., *Social Disparities in Nitrate-Contaminated Drinking Water in California’s San Joaquin Valley*, 119 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVES 1272 (2011).

¹⁷ Frederico Castillo et al., *Environmental Health Threats to Latino Migrant Farmworkers*, 42 ANNUAL REVIEW PUBLIC HEALTH 257 (2021).

¹⁸ Cal. Health & Safety Code § 116688(a); State Water Board, *State and Regional Water Boards*, https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterboards_map.html.

¹⁹ Cal. Health & Safety Code § 116688(b)(1).

²⁰ *Id.* § 116688(b)(1)(A).

²¹ *Id.* § 116688(b)(1)(B).

²² *Id.* § 116688(b)(1)(C).

²³ *Id.* § 116688(b)(2).

²⁴ *Id.* § 116688(b)(3).

²⁵ *Id.* § 116688(d).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Cal. Health & Safety Code §§ 116650, 116655.

²⁸ Cal. Business & Professions Code § 17200 et seq.

²⁹ Cal. Health & Safety Code § 116688(f).

³⁰ Cal. Civil Code § 1942.5.

³¹ California Office of the Attorney General, *Landlord-Tenant Issues*, <https://oag.ca.gov/tenants>.