



AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING STORY

INCREASING ARSENIC TESTING IN PRIVATE WELLS

Florence and Marinette Counties, Wisconsin

THE PROBLEM

Florence and Marinette counties, located in northeastern Wisconsin, are among the seven Wisconsin counties with the highest average amount of arsenic in private wells. Data from their [County Environmental Health Profiles](#) showed the average arsenic levels in these two counties were elevated and above safe levels. Staff at the Florence and Marinette County health departments wanted to improve well water testing rates in order to raise awareness of this problem and reduce the number of private wells with harmful arsenic levels.

WHAT FLORENCE AND MARINETTE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS DID

The Florence and Marinette County health departments received funding and technical assistance from Wisconsin Tracking to conduct targeted outreach. The counties focused on townships farthest from their public health offices, making efforts to increase access for rural residents in areas where past testing revealed high arsenic levels.

Staff from the counties presented at town meetings where they educated key community leaders about the importance of well testing and the health effects of arsenic. The buy-in from those leaders was critical in spreading the word throughout the community. The collaboration led to earned media stories and a radio public service announcement that reached 20,000 listeners. The approach paid off: the counties distributed 250 tests and received 219 back, achieving an 88% return rate.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

County health department staff connected well owners with resources for interpreting test results, and if necessary, technical assistance for fixing their arsenic problem. The township-level approach made it easier for staff to reach members of their target audience all at once. Not only did well testing for arsenic increase in this targeted population, but residents now have a stronger relationship to their health department, which will extend beyond the scope of the grant period.



We provided a great service to our rural communities by offering test kits, clearer lab results, and educational information. We were able to make it easier for our communities to make informed decisions impacting their health.

ANNETTE SEIBOLD
Health Officer
Florence County Health
Department

WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM
Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health

dhs.wisconsin.gov/epht | OCTOBER 2016 | dhstracking@wi.gov Department
of Health Services | Division of Public Health | P-01595D (rev. 09/2017)

This project funded by the Tracking team's *Taking Action with Data* program.

