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Office of the Mayor

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Health Department Reports Uranium Contamination in Stamford Wells

STAMFORD, CT – The Stamford Department of Health has confirmed that there are several wells contaminated with uranium in Stamford. According to Anne Fountain, Director of Health & Social Services, of the 60 test results received by the Stamford Health Department Laboratory, 42 (70%) of the wells have tested positive for uranium and 16 (23%) were at or above acceptable levels (EPA defined Maximum Contaminant Levels). In light of these results, the Department is encouraging residents to sign up and have their wells tested.

“Exposure to uranium can have potentially harmful health effects and we are urging everyone to sign up and have their wells tested. The only way to know if you have uranium in your water is to have your water tested at a state certified testing laboratory,” said Anne Fountain.

After learning that other communities discovered high levels of arsenic and uranium in local wells, the Stamford Department of Health & Social Services broadened its testing program to test for these contaminants. The Department had already tested for the pesticides dieldrin, chlordane, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Following the news, the City updated its local ordinance to ensure that the City would continue to test for these chemicals in the future. The program’s expansion was also supported by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). Mayor David Martin is encouraging residents to use this service, saying “It is important for homeowners to test their wells to ensure safe drinking water. This is a great program and I urge residents to take advantage of it.”

Arsenic and uranium are metals that occur naturally in bedrock all over the world, according to the DPH. When groundwater comes in contact with the bedrock, the metals may leach out and contaminate private wells. The DPH warns that both metals are considered toxic and can have a variety of adverse health effects if people are exposed at high enough levels and for a long period of time.

According to DPH Epidemiologist Brian Toal, the toxicity of the uranium metal has been associated with adverse effects on kidney function. “It is important to point out the health risks [from arsenic and uranium] are usually long-term risks and chronic, and may not be noticed for years”.

If uranium is detected in your water with concentrations above the action level, then you need to refrain from drinking and cooking until the water is treated. Uranium can be

removed effectively from your water by using a filtration system. There are two types of systems recommended, reverse osmosis system and ion-exchange system.

To sign up for testing call 203-977-0816. The cost of the test is \$100. If you have any questions about well testing please call the Stamford Department of Health Laboratory, 203-977-4378, or visit the City's well water resource site, www.stamfordct.gov/well-water-testing , or the CT Department of Public Health http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental_health/eoha/pdf/uranium_in_well_water.pdf.

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