



EnviroTrack

Tracking the Environment and Public Health in Your Community

Spring 2026

PRIVATE WELL WATER & ARSENIC

Many homes in Marion County get their water from a private well instead of a municipal water system. Well water is generally a safe and healthy source of drinking water but can sometimes contain manmade or natural contaminants.



One of the most common contaminants found in wells in Marion County is arsenic. Arsenic is a naturally occurring metal found in soil and bedrock and can dissolve in groundwater. Long-term exposure can increase your risk of skin, bladder, and other cancers. Other health effects may include cardiovascular problems, nerve damage, diabetes, and skin changes.

The current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard for arsenic in Public Water Systems is 10 micrograms per liter (ug/L). However, private wells are unregulated, so MCPHD uses this standard for reference only.

Arsenic is odorless and colorless, and the only way to know if it is in your well is to have it tested. If your well does have high levels of arsenic, there are several things you can do to reduce your exposure:

- Install a treatment system. Reverse osmosis or distillation are common treatment methods. Consult with a licensed water treatment professional before installing a treatment system
- Connect to a Public Water Supply. For more information, contact www.citizensenergygroup.com.
- Drill a new well. Contact a licensed well driller at <https://www.in.gov/dnr/water/ground-water-wells/>
- Buy bottled water for drinking and cooking



Contact the MCPHD Department of Water Quality and Hazardous Materials Management for a FREE well sample.

*MCPHD does not enforce water quality standards of private wells for homeowners. However, landlords are required to meet the standards set in Chapter 18. Visit <https://marionhealth.org/private-well-program/> to learn more.



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Private Well Water and Arsenic
- Outdoor Air Quality
- Spring Cleaning and Safe Chemical Use
- New Website Preview
- Groundwater Awareness Week

OUTDOOR AIR QUALITY

When planning outdoor activities, you probably check your weather app for the temperature and forecast. You might also check the outdoor air quality. Weather apps and websites can provide lots of information about current air quality, but it can be difficult to know how to use this information.

What does the Air Quality Indicator (AQI) show?

- **Number:** An air quality index score is calculated from the concentration of a pollutant among all monitors in a reporting area. The number shown falls into one of six categories that correspond to levels of health concern.
- **Color:** The AQI is divided into six color-coded categories. Each category corresponds to an increasing level of health concern and higher pollution level. Air pollution data is categorized in this way to make health impacts easier to understand and communicate to the public.
- **Pollutant:** Particulate Matter (PM or particle pollution) and Ozone are the most often reported pollutants. Communities may also be required to report levels of Carbon Monoxide, Sulfur Dioxide, and Nitrogen Dioxide but there are fewer monitors measuring these pollutants, so you are less likely to see them on a weather app or AQI.

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution			
Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 - 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 - 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 - 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 - 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 - 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

Click image to visit <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/>

Particulate matter is a mixture of tiny solid and liquid particles that can be found in the air. PM are categorized by size; for example, PM_{2.5} is 2.5 micrometers or smaller in diameter. For reference, a strand of hair is about 50-70 micrometers across. They are a health concern because small particles can be inhaled deep into the lungs and may enter the bloodstream.

Ground-level ozone is different from the protective layer of ozone found in the atmosphere. Ozone (O₃) forms when chemical reactions occur in the presence of heat or sunlight. Ozone is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) because it can damage lungs.

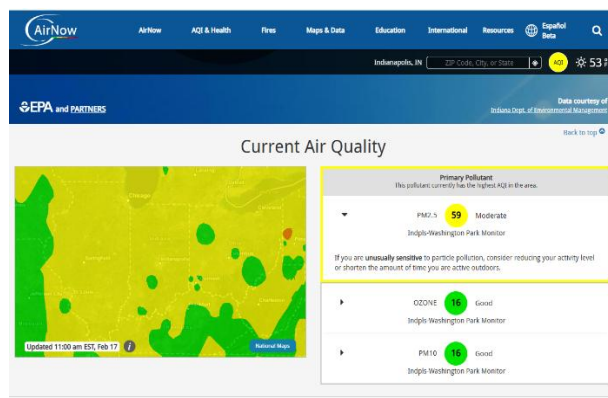
Where does air quality data come from? Air quality data can come from multiple sources. Most readings include data from EPA monitors. Different locations may show different information for several reasons, including spatial differences and data sources.

Websites like AirNow also show maps that include locations of different monitors and map layers with current air quality levels. For large areas between monitors, the pollution level is estimated using a method called spatial interpolation.



Tips to Reduce Your Exposure:

- Monitor air quality before making plans for outdoor activities. If you or your child has asthma, be prepared for weather events that can impact air quality or trigger asthma, like storms or extreme heat and cold.
- Avoid outdoor activities when air pollution levels are high.
- Create an Asthma Action Plan with your child's doctor. Visit [American Lung Association](#) to learn more.



Tips to Reduce Outdoor Air Pollution:

- Reduce energy use at home; turn down the thermostat, insulate your house, try hand-powered or battery-operated lawn equipment, clean or replace filters regularly, and increase natural light.
- Don't burn wood or trash. Burning wood and trash creates emissions that are harmful to health including particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds.
- Drive less. If possible, consider carpooling, combining your errands into one trip, etc.

More Resources

[AirNow website](#)

[CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking website](#)

[Indiana Department of Environmental Management-Air Quality](#)

[American Lung Association-Outdoor Air](#)

SPRING CLEANING AND SAFE CHEMICAL USE

Spring is here, and for a lot of people that means spring cleaning! While cleaning your house can seem like a harmless activity, improper use and storage of chemicals can be dangerous. Follow the steps below for safe storage, use, and disposal of the chemicals in your home.

Safe Storage:

- Follow label instructions.
- Store products in original containers with labels.
- Keep in a safe, secure location out of reach of children and pets. Use locks on cabinets and shelves.
- Store away from heat and light. Keep any products that can catch on fire away from your home and away from open flames or heat source. Look for words like “flammable” or “combustible.”
- Separate chemicals according to specific hazard. For example, store bleach-containing products away from ammonia-based cleaners and vinegar.
- Keep chemicals away from food and beverages.



Safe Use:

- Follow manufacturer instructions.
- Never mix chemicals; this can lead to fires or deadly reactions.
- Wear appropriate protective gear, like safety goggles and gloves.
- If you are diluting a chemical, always add chemical to water, **do not** add water to chemical. This slows down a potentially dangerous reaction and reduces splash risk.
- Use chemicals in well-ventilated areas.
- Don't eat, drink, or smoke while handling hazardous materials.



Safe Disposal:

- Follow disposal procedures on the label.
- Contact ToxDrop <https://www.indy.gov/activity/hazardous-waste-dropoff-sites>

NEW WEBSITE PREVIEW

MCPHD Environmental Tracking is getting a new website! This spring, we will have a new and improved site with more environmental topics, interactive health dashboards, and downloadable data.

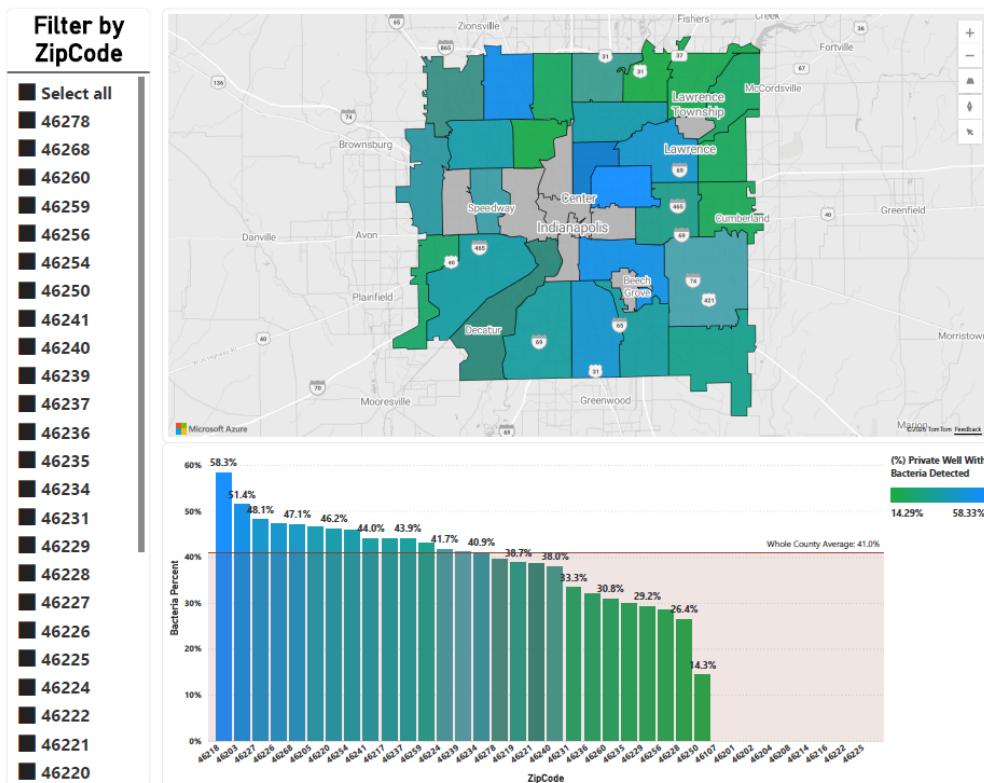
Topics will include:

- Private well water quality
- Community water systems
- Asthma Emergency Department (ED) and Hospitalization rates
- COPD ED and Hospitalization rates
- Heart Attack Hospitalization rates

Future topics will include outdoor air quality and radon test results. You can also find links to resources, MCPHD contact information, and the EnviroTrack newsletter.

Check out the images below for a sneak peek!

Geographic Distribution of Bacterial Contamination in Marion County Private Wells (2020-2024)



Note: gray zip codes did not have enough data available to make an accurate assessment of the percentage of tests positive for bacteria. Zip codes with fewer than 5 tests were excluded to reduce misleading information.



GROUNDWATER AWARENESS WEEK

March 8-14, 2026, is National Groundwater Awareness Week! This annual observance was established in 1999 to encourage responsible groundwater practices. One way to take action this year is by testing your well water at home! Did you know that the EPA recommends annual testing of your private well water?

Marion County Public Health Department offers FREE well testing to Marion Co. residents! Call 317-221-2266 or visit <https://aca-prod.accela.com/MCPHD/customization/common/home.aspx> to schedule a well water sample.



**NATIONAL
GROUNDWATER
AWARENESS WEEK**
March 8-14, 2026



5 WAYS TO SAVE WATER
Every. Drop. Counts.

-  Fix leaks
-  Rainwater harvesting
-  Bucket baths instead of long showers
-  Water plants early morning/evening
-  Reuse wastewater for cleaning/gardening

@nationalgroundwater

#GWA26

For more information on Groundwater Awareness Week and resources for well owners, visit <https://www.ngwa.org/get-involved/gwaw>

IMPORTANT DATES

Observances:

- Groundwater Awareness Week (March 8-14)
- World Water Day (March 22)
- Low-Head Dam Safety Awareness Month (April)
- National Public Health Week (April 6-12)
- National Asthma Awareness Month (May)

MCPHD Offices Closed:

- May 5 (Primary Election Day)
- May 25 (Memorial Day)

TAG Meetings:

- May 28 (WebEx)

LOCAL RESOURCES

- **ToxDrop** events offer Marion County residents an opportunity to safely dispose of household hazardous waste. For more dates and a list of accepted items, visit <https://www.indy.gov/activity/hazardous-waste-dropoff-sites>.
- **Homeowner Repair Program** provides access to resources so low- and moderate-income homeowners can stabilize their homes. To learn more, visit <https://www.indy.gov/activity/home-repair-program> or call 317-327-4663.

TRACKING UPDATES

MCPHD is piloting an Air Monitoring Study! We currently have one active monitor located near West Morris St and Belmont Ave, with more to come around West Indianapolis neighborhoods. You can check the current air quality at [The PurpleAir Map](#).

*Marion County Public Health Department
Environmental Tracking*

<https://marionhealth.org/ephtracking/>
MCPHDTracking@marionhealth.org