

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Will County Health Department Environmental Health Division's quarterly newsletter.

The Environmental Health (EH) Division provides inspections and investigates complaints of public food facilities, private water wells, private wastewater treatment systems, swimming pools and bathing beaches, tanning and body art facilities, and non-community public water supplies. The EH Division participates in two vector programs: West Nile Virus & Tick Surveillance and provides education materials on radon gas risks as well as radon test kits for sale to the public.

The majority of our programs run all year round, but a few of our programs are seasonal, such as Vector Surveillance, Swimming Pools & Bathing beaches. The intent of the quarterly newsletter is to highlight current topics and events in each of the Environmental Health Division's programs and provide education on those programs.



Will County  
Health Department &  
Community Health Center

## Our Programs

## FOOD PROGRAM



## CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS SAFELY

Will County has approximately 2800 permitted foodservice facilities. The Environmental Health Division conducts plan reviews, opening and routine inspections at foodservice facilities, temporary food events, mobile food units and cottage food operations. Each year, hundreds of people in Illinois become ill and some are hospitalized because food they ate at a holiday meal was handled or prepared in an unsafe way. Follow food safety tips to protect you and your family. Don't serve up a foodborne illness this holiday. [Click here to read the Holiday Food Safety Tips.](#)



## HALLOWEEN SAFETY

Halloween is right around the corner. Even though it's not an official holiday, Halloween is much beloved by children and adults alike. What could be more fun than trick-or-treating, apple bobbing, or costume parties? To make sure treats are safe for children, [click here to read the safety tips from the FDA.](#)



## PATHOGEN PROFILE - SALMONELLA

Salmonella is a motile, non-sporeforming, Gram-negative, rod-shaped bacterium in the family Enterobacteriaceae and the tribe Salmonellae. Salmonella causes two kinds of illness, gastrointestinal illness and typhoidal illness. Here's a breakdown of the two illnesses caused by salmonella, including symptoms and duration.

**Gastrointestinal illness**, which causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramps, and fever, with symptoms generally lasting a couple of days and tapering off within a week (Many kinds of food can become contaminated with this type, from meats and eggs to fruits and vegetables, and even dry foods, like spices and raw tree nuts.).

- **Onset:** 6 to 72 hours after exposure
- **Infective dose:** As low as one cell, depending on age and health of host and strain differences among members of the genus.
- **Symptoms:** Nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, fever, headache
- **Duration:** Symptoms generally last 4 to 7 days, with acute symptoms usually lasting 1 to 2 days or longer, depending on host factors, the dose ingested, and strain characteristics.

**Typhoidal illness** causes high fever, diarrhea or constipation, aches, headache, and lethargy (drowsiness or sluggishness), and, sometimes, a rash. It's a very serious condition; up to 10% of people who don't get treatment may die (The typhoidal illness usually is associated with sewage-contaminated drinking water, or crops irrigated with sewage-contaminated water.).

- **Onset:** Generally, 1 to 3 weeks, but may be as long as 2 months after exposure.
- **Infective dose:** Fewer than 1,000 cells.
- **Symptoms:** High fever, from 103° to 104°F; lethargy; gastrointestinal symptoms, including abdominal pains and diarrhea or constipation; headache; achiness; loss of appetite. A rash of flat, rose-colored spots sometimes occurs.
- **Duration:** Generally, 2 to 4 weeks.

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**FOOD PROGRAM  
(CONTINUED)****SALMONELA (CONTINUED)**

Note: Nontyphoidal salmonellosis – A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1,027,561 cases of domestically acquired nontyphoidal salmonellosis occur annually in the U.S., when under-reporting and under-diagnosis are taken into account.

**FOOD SAFETY IN-SERVICE  
AVAILABLE**

The EH Division is available to provide in-person food safety in-services on various topics for primary, middle & high school students and cafeteria staff. The in-service is typically 45 to 60 minutes in length and if school administrators are interested, please contact Sean M. Conners, Director of Environmental Health Services, at (815) 727-8846 or [sconners@willcountyhealth.org](mailto:sconners@willcountyhealth.org)

**REMINDER FOR FOOD  
SERVICE FACILITIES**

Your 2024 annual food facility permit renews January 1, 2024. Invoices from the Will County Health Department Environmental Health Division will be mailed out in mid-November.

**PRIVATE WATER WELLS/NCPWS PROGRAM****PRIVATE WATER WELLS**

The Will County Health Department Environmental Health Division recommends all water from private wells to be analyzed for bacteria at least once every year. Sample bottles for this purpose are available at the Will County Health Department Environmental Health Lab and branch offices from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

If a homeowner receives an unsatisfactory sample result, the Will County Health Department recommends that the homeowner work with a licensed well contractor.

**NON-COMMUNITY PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS (NCPWS) -  
WHAT IS IT?**

The Safe Water Drinking Act (SDWA) regulates public water systems. There are three types of public water systems in Illinois: community; transient, non-community; and non-transient, non-community water systems. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) regulates community systems, and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) regulates non-community systems. Both agencies are responsible for enforcing the SDWA standards. The Will County Health Department Environmental Health Division works as an agent of IDPH and runs the NCPWS program in Will County.

1. A transient, non-community water system regularly serves at least 25 individuals; but not the same individuals, for more than 60 days per year. For example, a rest area, campground or restaurant having less than 25 employees on its own water supply or well.
2. A non-transient, non-community water system regularly serves at least 25 individuals of the same people more than six months per year. For example, a school or business with its own water supply is considered a non-transient system.

There are approximately 300 active NCPWS in Will County and the Environmental Health Division is responsible for sampling on behalf of the IDPH. The Environmental Health Division's sanitarians perform a biennial sanitary survey (inspection) for each NCPWS which consists of an on-site evaluation of the water source, equipment, operation, and maintenance of the water system for producing and distributing safe drinking water.

The water systems must provide drinking water that meets state and federal drinking water standards. All bacterial drinking water samples are analyzed initially for total coliform. If a sample is positive for total coliform, the sample must be analyzed again to determine if *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) is present.

Total coliforms serve as indicators of the efficiency of water treatment, of the integrity of the water source (well) and the pipes in the distribution system, and as a screen for the presence of fecal contamination. The presence of *E. coli* in a drinking water sample indicates recent contamination and signals a greater possibility that pathogenic organisms may be in the water.

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**SWIMMING POOLS & BATHING  
BEACHES PROGRAM**

Will County currently inspects approximately 150 public swimming pools (indoor & outdoor) and bathing beaches. This time of year is our slow season because most of the pools & and beaches are closed. The pool and beach season picks up in the late Spring near the end of May.

**TANNING & BODY ART  
PROGRAM**

The Environmental Health Division conducts licensures for all tanning and body art facilities to assure they are operating in accordance with IDPH regulations. Body Art isn't just your typical tattoo parlor; it includes micro-blading and permanent make-up establishments. The Environmental Health Division recommends that if you choose to use any of these businesses that you ensure that they are a licensed facility.

**PRIVATE SEWAGE PROGRAM**

The Environmental Health Division conducts soil/site evaluations, septic system permitting, inspections on all new and repaired septic systems, sampling of discharging wastewater treatment systems, tank abandonments and pumper truck/dump site inspections. All work must be done by a licensed contractor, and the Will County Health Department works with these contractors to ensure new and repairs to existing systems are done according to code.

**TRADITIONAL SEPTIC TANK AND DRAIN FIELD**

Household wastewater flows from drainpipes in the house to an outside drain line that empties into a large tank called a septic tank. As wastewater comes into the tank it is slowed by a baffle. The tank is always full of wastewater, to the level of the outlet pipes. The tank is meant to hold the water for up to 24 hours.

This allows solids to separate and settle out. These solids will partially decompose over time, but not completely. Over time, a layer of solids (called sludge) slowly builds up in the bottom of the tank. A grease layer (called scum) also builds up on top of wastewater.

With little to no oxygen present in the tank, bacteria that function in the absence of oxygen partially decompose organic materials present. Called anaerobic bacteria, they also produce gases that can be harmful or fatal to humans in large concentrations.

At the outlet end of the tank, another baffle is present to prevent scum from entering the drain lines. Partially treated wastewater, (called effluent) flows out of the tank into a line or multiple lines made up usually of plastic pipe with small perforations. The effluent is evenly distributed throughout this drainage field. As the liquid moves into the soil, bacteria in the soil complete the treatment process, removing impurities and pathogens.

**VECTOR SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMS****WEST NILE VIRUS**

The Environmental Health Division receives a grant from the IDPH so we can provide education, larvicide and vector control/surveillance. Our staff place mosquito traps throughout the county and the traps are collected two times each week during the peak mosquito season, May to the end of September (depending on the weather). The collected mosquitoes are

tested at our Joliet office for the presence of West Nile Virus. The EH Division also collect dead birds to be tested by IDPH for the presence of West Nile Virus. Positive results of West Nile Virus in birds or mosquitoes are reported to the public via the Will County Health Department website, press release, and on our social media platforms.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
LAB

The Environmental Health Laboratory runs analyses on wells, individual mechanical systems, and beaches. Throughout the year, homeowners can bring in their well water to be tested for total coliform and E. coli bacteria, nitrate, fluoride, and hardness.

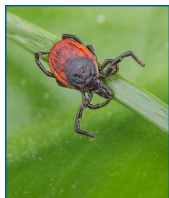
The laboratory can also provide testing of beach samples and routinely tests the beaches in Will County from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The laboratory collects samples from all individual mechanical septic systems in Will County and will also accept samples from septic companies. Septic systems are tested for Fecal Coliform bacteria, pH, residual chlorine, suspended solids, and biological oxygen demand.

The Environmental Health Laboratory is certified in microbiology analyses from Illinois Department of Public Health and in chemistry, for well testing, from Illinois Environmental Protection Agency/ The NELAC Institute. The laboratory staff and laboratory in general is certified every 2 years.

For more information regarding sample analysis, please call us at 815-727-8517. visit our website at [www.willcountyhealth.org](http://www.willcountyhealth.org).



## VECTOR SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMS (CONTINUED)



## TICK SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

The Environmental Health Division received a new grant initiative from IDPH Vector Surveillance and Control Program. The grant provides funding to our division to conduct active tick surveillance and provide tickborne disease prevention awareness. The EH Division will complete six active tick surveillance events, submit collected ticks to IDPH for identification and pathogen testing, and provide four educational posts through local news media or social media to inform the public about personal protection against tickborne disease.

There are four species of ticks that will be the focus of the surveillance program. They are the Blacklegged or Deer Tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), Lone Star Tick (*Amblyomma americanum*), American Dog Tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) & the Gulf Coast Tick (*Amblyomma maculatum*). Our first active tick surveillance event will be completed at the end of October, and we will focus on the Blacklegged/Deer Tick because the adult tick for this species is still active this time of the year. The habitat for the Blacklegged/Deer Tick is a wooded terrain with elevation, not floodplains, and this tick needs deer/game trails with plenty of leaf litter. Please click on the links below for flyers from the CDC and IDPH on ticks.

[“It’s Open Season on Ticks” flyer from the CDC](#)

[“Don’t Get Sick Check for Ticks” flyer from the IDPH](#)

## RADON PROGRAM



October is Healthy Lung Month and November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month, so this is an opportunity for the Environmental Health Division to highlight that Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, according to EPA estimates. Overall, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. The Environmental Health Division offers Radon Test Kits for sale at all three of our offices for \$8.00.

## CONTACT US/LOCATIONS

if you have any questions about any of our Environmental Health Division’s programs, please feel free to contact us at any of our locations or visit our website at [www.willcountyhealth.org](http://www.willcountyhealth.org).

**Main Office**  
501 Ella Avenue  
Joliet, IL 60433  
(815) 727-8490

**EH Lab**  
501 Ella Avenue  
Joliet, IL 60433  
(815) 727-8517

**Northern Branch**  
323 Quadrangle Dr.  
Bolingbrook, IL 60440  
(630) 679-7030

**Eastern Branch**  
5601 W. Monee-Manhattan Rd.  
Monee, IL 60449  
(708) 534-5721