

## Congratulations!

You are one of nearly a million Minnesotans who rely on a private well to supply water for drinking, food preparation, irrigation, or many other agricultural, commercial, or domestic purposes. A well provides a reliable, safe source of drinking water when the well is properly located, constructed, and maintained.

Before a new well is constructed, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) receives a notification form from the well contractor or property owner. The MDH then sends the property owner a verification that the well construction notification (permit) has been received. This brochure provides you with some background information about your new well and explains some of the things you should expect. The brochure also discusses how you can keep your well in a safe operating condition and lists some resources for further information.

The construction of a safe well involves a partnership between the owner, the well contractor, and the MDH or a delegated local well program. Each has specific individual responsibilities, and all need to be involved in the process.



## The Well Contractor

The well contractor is responsible for:

- Assuring a proper location for your new well by locating it on high ground with good drainage and a sufficient distance from sources of contamination.
- Using materials that meet established standards.
- Following approved construction methods including requirements to fill open space between the well casing and the drilled hole with grout.
- Disinfecting the well.
- Collecting a water sample from the well and having it analyzed for coliform bacteria, nitrate, and arsenic.
- Providing you with a copy of the water sample results and the Well and Boring Record.

## The Well Owner

As a well owner, you play an important part in assuring the long term safety of your investment in safe drinking water. While a well requires a surprisingly small amount of maintenance and care, here are some of the things you should check on:

**After the well has been constructed**, do not use the water from the well for drinking and cooking until you receive satisfactory water sample results.

**Test your well water** at a state-certified laboratory. Test for **coliform bacteria** every year, for **nitrate** every year or two, and for both before you start giving the water to an infant. If the well was constructed before August 2008, test the water at least once for **arsenic**. Test at least once for **lead**, or flush standing water to reduce possible lead levels before drinking. (See the end of this brochure for more information about well water quality.)



**Maintain the minimum setback or "isolation" distances** between the well and buildings, electric lines and gas pipes, and sources of contamination, such as sewers, septic systems, and fuel tanks.

**Protect the well from damage** by being careful not to bump the well with lawn mowers, snow plows, or other equipment.

**Keep the well and plumbing connections watertight.** Make sure the well has an approved well cap or cover and keep it on tight.

**Prevent backflow** by making sure that hoses and faucets have backflow prevention devices. Do not submerge hoses in any liquids.

**If you have a septic system, keep it in good condition** by having a complying system, evaluating the amount of solids in the septic tank at least once every three years, and not disposing of hazardous materials in the septic system.

**Prevent contaminants from entering the well** by keeping the top of the well casing and the well cap or cover at least 12 inches above ground, preventing the well from being flooded, and keeping the area around it free from hazardous chemicals.

**Disinfect the well** with chlorine following pump replacement, repair of the well or plumbing system, or if flooding has occurred.



**Inspect your well** for cracks, subsidence of the ground around the casing, a missing or loose cover, or other problems. Have the problems corrected.

**Have service work done** only by a qualified contractor licensed to work on wells.

**Seal unused or abandoned wells** to protect groundwater and your well from contamination. State law requires unused wells to be sealed by a licensed well contractor, or be under a state maintenance permit.

**Keep records** of the well, maintenance, water sample test results, and well sealing with the other important papers about your property.

## The Minnesota Department of Health:

- Establishes minimum well location and construction standards.
- Licenses well contractors.
- Inspects a percentage of new wells to verify proper construction methods.
- Investigates complaints and contamination events.

If you have any questions, please contact an MDH well specialist at an office listed on the back of this brochure.

## Interested in learning more about your well?

### Order your copy of the WELL OWNER'S HANDBOOK!

This free owner's manual provides information on:

- Groundwater.
- How a well is constructed.
- How a water system works.
- Well water contaminants.
- What can be done to keep the well water safe to drink.
- How to have a well properly sealed.

To order a copy of the Well Owner's Handbook, call 651-201-4600 or 800-383-9808. Also available at [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/construction/handbook.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/construction/handbook.pdf).

The MDH also has the following brochures about wells and water quality available at no cost:

#### **Arsenic in Minnesota's Well Water**

#### **Bacterial Safety of Well Water Building, Remodeling, Demolition, and Wells**

#### **Copper in Drinking Water Commonly asked Questions about Springs**

#### **Home Water Treatment Units: Point-of-Use Devices for Lead Removal**

#### **Iron Bacteria in Well Water**

#### **Iron in Well Water**

#### **Lead in Well Water Systems**

#### **Nitrate in Well Water**

#### **Protect Your Health – Test Your Private Well Water**

#### **Protecting Your Well**

#### **Sealing Unused Wells**

#### **Sulfate in Well Water**

#### **Volatile Organic Chemicals in Drinking Water**

#### **Well Disclosure**

#### **Well Disinfection**

#### **Why Does My Well Water Smell Like Rotten Eggs? Hydrogen Sulfide and Sulfur Bacteria in Well Water**



To order a brochure, call 651-201-4600 or 800-383-9808 or visit the MDH Well Management Section website at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/).

For more information, contact one of the following MDH offices:

### **MDH District Offices**

625 North Robert Street  
P.O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0975  
651-201-4600 or 800-383-9808

705 Fifth Street Northwest  
Bemidji, Minnesota 56601  
218-308-2100

320 West Second Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802  
218-723-4642

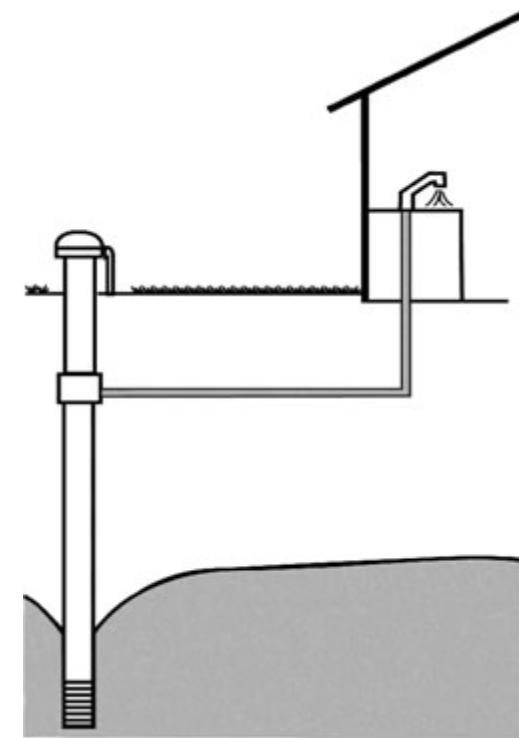
1505 Pebble Lake Road  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56537  
218-332-5150

3333 West Division Street  
St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301  
320-223-7300

1400 East Lyon Street  
Marshall, Minnesota 56258  
507-537-7151

18 Wood Lake Drive Southeast  
Rochester, Minnesota 55904  
507-206-2700

# Your New Well



**Well Management Section  
Environmental Health Division**

To request this document in another format, call 651-201-4600.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing: TTY 651-201-5797.

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