

#6 Wellhead Protection

No Well Is an Island

Although wellhead protection is only required for certain types of public water supply wells, private wells can benefit from many of the same protection measures. Wellhead protection involves identifying potential sources of contamination and managing those sources to prevent the contaminants from reaching the aquifer, or ground water, that supplies water to the well. That aquifer often provides water for both private and public wells.

Contamination of private wells often occurs from sources that are in the vicinity of the well. Malfunctioning septic systems, improper disposal of garbage or hazardous wastes, spills or leaks of chemicals or fuels, etc. are all examples of potential pollution problems for wells. Once a contaminant is in ground water, it is very difficult to remove it and often very expensive to clean it up. Preventing pollutants from getting into ground water can benefit not only the well owner but the large number of people who use that aquifer for a drinking water supply.

Private well owners can take steps to protect their water supply and that of their neighbors.

- < How old is your septic system? If it is more than 25-30 years old, it may need to be upgraded. You can extend the life of a septic system by pumping the septic tank every 2-3 years, conserving water, and composting food wastes rather than using a garbage disposal. Household hazardous wastes, coffee grounds, and facial tissues are just a few things that do not belong in a septic system.
- < Reduce, reuse and recycle. Landfills can pollute ground water. Know which wastes can go to the landfill and which should be disposed of at hazardous waste facilities or in other ways to protect the environment.
- < Do not mix lawn, garden or agricultural chemicals in the vicinity of the well. Mixing should be done on a hard surface area where liquids can be contained.
- < Recycle used oil at an oil recycling center or local gas station. Don't pour used oil or old gasoline on the ground. Avoid spilling gasoline when filling a tank. If you own an underground fuel storage tank for gasoline or fuel oil, remove it and replace it with an above ground tank with proper safeguards for containing or preventing leaks or spills.