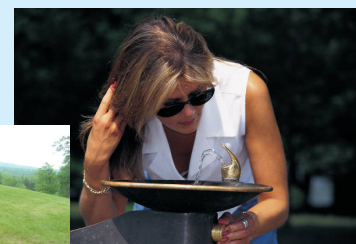


Do's & Don'ts: Protecting Your Wellhead and Drinking Water Supply

The drinking water supplied by wells comes from rain that falls in the neighborhood. How we live on and use the land around our wells affects the quality of our drinking water. Many land uses and everyday activities can cause pollution and contaminate our drinking water supplies. Whether you own and operate a public water system or are a neighbor to one, there are specific things you can do/avoid doing that will help protect the well and keep our drinking water safe:



Septic Systems

Septic Systems are one of the biggest threats to water supplies. The waste from homes and businesses going into septic systems is discharged into the groundwater. How well your septic system is able to handle waste depends on proper maintenance and upkeep of the septic system.

- ✓ **DO** have your septic tank pumped every 3 to 5 years.
- ✓ **DO** check for signs that your septic system is not working.
- ✓ **DO** keep surface water away from your septic system.
- ⊗ **DON'T** flush or pour chemicals down the drain.
- ⊗ **DON'T** use your toilet as a trash can. Disposing of non-biodegradable things and hazardous chemicals can damage your septic system.



Fuel Use and Storage

Oil and gasoline are necessities for most people in their everyday lives; yet, they also pose a big threat to water supply wells. Even a small amount of oil or gasoline that leaks or spills onto the ground can pollute a water supply well. For this reason, it is especially important to prevent leaks and spills in the first place. It is much less costly to prevent a spill than it is to clean it up once it contaminates a drinking water supply.



Photo by Rob Cook, July 2008

- ✓ **DO** handle gasoline and used motor oil carefully, clean up any spills immediately, and dispose of it at a recycling center.
- ✓ **DO** report any oil or gasoline spills at or near your property as soon as possible to the Maine DEP by calling their Spill Report number at 1-800-482-0777.
- ✓ **DO** inspect your heating oil tank and its piping, to make sure it's not leaking, starting to corrode or rust, or in danger of tipping over. If you're near a community public water system well, the Drinking Water Program or DEP may be able to work with the water system to help fund a double-walled replacement tank.
- ⊗ **DON'T** store oil or gasoline near your well. Store these materials safely and as far away from your well as you can, to help minimize the threat of contamination.



Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention
An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

John E. Baldacci, Governor

Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner

Maine CDC Drinking Water Program

“Working Together for Safe Drinking Water”

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Household Chemicals

Household Chemicals can contaminate your well if they are not properly handled. The care you take in handling, using, and properly disposing of these products can have a big impact on how well your water supply is protected and if these products end up in your well.



- ✓ **DO** store chemicals in a safe place, away from your well.
- ✓ **DO** read labels and dispose of chemicals properly. Take notice of when your community has household hazardous waste collection days.
- ✓ **DO** look for less toxic, environmentally friendly alternatives products.
- ✓ **DO** clean up any spills or accidental leaks right away and notify the Maine DEP at 1-800-452-4664.
- ⊘ **DON'T** pour chemicals on the ground, into sewer or septic systems, or put them in your trash. This is how groundwater gets contaminated.

Yard Maintenance & Animal Care

Many of us take pride in maintaining our lawns and yards, but what we do to make our yards look appealing can also have a negative impact on our drinking water supplies.

- ✓ **DO** use fertilizers and pesticides carefully (or not at all), so they won't wash down into your water supply. If you do use fertilizers or pesticides, use them minimally and don't use them near your well.
- ✓ **DO** store fertilizers and pesticides safely and as far away from your well as you can.
- ✓ **DO** look for alternatives before you decide to apply fertilizers or pesticides. There may be specific plants or gardening techniques you can use to help prevent pests and weed problems naturally, without the use of chemicals.
- ✓ **DO** keep pets and livestock (kennels, dog runs, pastures, feedlots) away from the well. Runoff from pet and livestock waste can pollute a well.
- ✓ **DO** keep manure piles covered, and store them on an impervious surface, such as a cement slab, to help to minimize runoff and seepage into the ground.



Your Neighbors

You can do a lot through your own activities to minimize the impact on your well, but if you have close neighbors, what they do can also have an impact on your well. For this reason, it is important to work with your neighbors and ensure they are taking steps to minimize *their* impact on your well. If your well is a public water system well, it is important that you tell your neighbor, so that they can be aware of the impacts their actions have on your well.

- ✓ **DO** encourage your neighbors to take care of their septic tanks, petroleum, and chemicals with as much care as you do.
- ✓ **DO** share with your neighbor the potential impacts their actions can have on your well (and theirs!).
- ✓ **DO** consider obtaining a protective covenant, easement, or ordinance within your wellhead protection area to limit the activities and land uses that can occur around your well. For more information, go to: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/eng/water/dwp_services/swp/ModelOrdinance/modelord1.htm



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