



Wells and Well Water

Fact Sheet

The Basics

Wells are a common source of water throughout St. Mary's County. In addition to drinking water, they are also constructed for use in home heating systems (geothermal heat), agricultural irrigation and to monitor groundwater conditions. The health department issues permits for the drilling of new wells.



Permits for Drilling Wells

A permit to drill a well is issued only to licensed well drillers. The licensed well driller is responsible for submitting all paperwork, including the permit application, documentation of the proposed well site, and location of existing septic system or other potential sources of contamination. A permit fee provides for the water sampling required of any new drinking well. These chemical and bacteriological samples are sent to the State central lab for testing to determine the proposed well location is in compliance with Maryland code (COMAR 26.04.04). If all standards set in the code are met, a certificate of potability is issued and the water from the well is documented as safe to drink.

Well Tagging System

Immediately after completion of the well, the well driller attaches an identification tag to the well casing. This tag, furnished by the Health Department, can be used to get information about the well. If the tag is lost, a new one can be requested by contacting Environmental Health Services at 301-475-4321. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the tag.

Additional Water Samples

It is not necessary to test well water samples regularly. However, if there is a special health concern or a change in taste or color of the water from a well, Environmental Health staff will collect a new water sample. The water sample request form, available on the Health Department website (www.smchd.org), requires a collection fee. A staff member will assist in determining which lab tests are necessary. **Additional lab test fees vary.** Any additions to an existing building do not require retesting the well; the addition must maintain an adequate setback from the well to protect the well from contamination.

When a well is replaced, the old well must be properly abandoned and sealed within 30 days after completion of the new well. The property owner is responsible to make sure this occurs.

For more information:

- St. Mary's County Health Department: Environmental Health Services- 301-475-4321