

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 St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) 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 the existing septic system or other potential sources of contamination. The permit fee covers the water sampling required for any new drinking well. Water samples collected by SMCHD team members for chemical and bacteriological testing are sent to the State Central Lab to determine whether the newly constructed drinking water well 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 the completion of a permanent drilled well with a casing above ground, the well driller attaches an identification tag to the casing. This tag, furnished by the SMCHD, can be used to obtain information about the well. If the tag is lost, a new one can be requested by contacting the SMCHD Environmental Health Division at 301-475-4321 or smchd.env@maryland.gov. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the tag.

Additional Water Samples

It is not necessary to test the water quality of private supplies regularly. However, if there is a special health concern or a change in taste or color of the water from a well, SMCHD Environmental Health team members may be available to collect a new water sample. The water sample request form is available on the SMCHD website (smchd.org). A fee is required for the sample collection, and the State Central Lab charges fees, which vary by the tests requested. SMCHD does not routinely require retesting the well when a building addition is proposed, although retesting may be required by a lender. All proposed additions must meet minimum setbacks from the well and not prohibit future maintenance or replacement.

When a well is replaced, the old well must be properly abandoned and sealed following completion of a new well. A licensed well driller is required to abandon and seal drilled wells.

For more information:

SMCHD Environmental Health Division
301-475-4321 or smchd.env@maryland.gov