



www.nhwaterwell.com

Information: New Hampshire Water Well Association

Information in this document is provided in good faith to inform the public about groundwater and water wells. Well owners should ensure that their well contractor has obtained permits (if required) and has referred to local codes, rules, regulations and laws for site selection, construction, maintenance and operation of water wells and water system equipment.

DO-IT-YOURSELF WATER WELLS

Before the existence of water well drilling equipment, many people relied on shallow “dug” wells and springs as a water supply. Today we know these sources of water are very susceptible to contamination from pathogens and pollutants (especially from bacteria and nitrates) and prone to “drying up” in times of drought. The cost of a properly constructed drilled well should be looked at as an investment that increases the value of your property.

Saving money is something many of us try to accomplish with varying degrees of success. This goal may be achieved by tackling a project yourself, such as installing a garage door opener or painting the house. However there are some tasks best left to the professionals because of the complexities of using specialized equipment and the potential to cause harm if things go wrong. Constructing water wells is one of these undertakings that requires specialized expensive equipment and operation experience. A badly constructed well is not only a direct potential health risk but may create a downward pathway that allows contaminants to reach the aquifer and threaten water quality in the surrounding community.

However, in “Live Free or Die” New Hampshire, a homeowner can install their own well without a license but must then submit a “well completion report” describing the well’s design and construction, the soil and rock conditions encountered and the well’s yield within 90 days of the completion of the well installation.

For most local jurisdictions in the state it is ILLEGAL to construct any kind of water well without first obtaining a permit. Any person/ company offering well construction services MUST be licensed. The NHWWA web-site lists member contractors who are licensed. (www.nhwaterwell.com.)

A drilled water well is an engineered hole in the ground. Most domestic water wells in New Hampshire are drilled to a depth of a hundred feet or more and are completed in bedrock. There are three reasons for drilling deep beneath the surface:

- First, to find dependable water bearing fractures or saturated sediments,
- Second, to minimize the chance of contamination from surface pollutants and pathogens,
- Third, the drilled well provides water storage (1½ gallons per foot in a six-inch diameter well)

To provide protection for the underlying aquifers, New Hampshire has very specific regulations and recommendations for the construction and location of wells for single family homes:

- Surface water and drainage culverts should not pass within 25 feet of a well (50 ft recommended)
- Animals should not be penned or tied within 20 feet of a well (75 ft recommended).
- Leach fields and septic tanks may not be located within 75 feet of a well.
- Wells may not be located within 50 feet of the right of way line of state maintained roads
- Wells may not be placed within 75 feet of adjacent property which you do not control.
- A well should not be placed in locations subject to flooding
- Well casing should be set 10-20 feet into bedrock (plastic well casing is not recommended)
- A hardened steel drive shoe is required to seal the steel casing to the bedrock socket.

If a home has an improperly constructed well, the property may be difficult to sell. For home sales, state regulation (RSA 477:4c) requires disclosure of the water system’s location, date of installation, disclosure of any malfunctions, date of the most recent water test, and whether or not the seller has experienced a problem such as an unsatisfactory water test. New Hampshire regulations require that wells no longer in use must be properly maintained or be abandoned and decommissioned by a licensed New Hampshire water well contractor.

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The NH Dept of Environmental Services web-site has several fact sheets about well construction, for example WD-DWGB-1-7 and WDDWGB12

A licensed water well contractor – your best source for information