



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.

SEASONAL USE OF WATER WELLS

A summer home requires regular maintenance for general upkeep. Your summer home water well should be on the routine checklist. Most private wells will operate trouble-free for many years with periodic inspections and maintenance. However, many summer homes, cottages or cabins do not have wells designed and constructed to modern standards. If you have a dug well or a shallow well-point as a supply source you need to be particularly careful about checking the water quality.

During extended periods of inactivity, well water may pick up unpleasant odors and tastes from reactions between the minerals in the soil and rock and the oxygen entering through the well. When "opening up," your first step in checking the water quality is to turn on every tap and faucet in and out of the house for five minutes. This will remove any stale water that has been sitting in the pipes and pressure tank and will also begin to flush the well itself. Depending on the diameter and depth of your well, the rate of inflow, the minerals in your aquifer and other factors, you may have to run the pump for half an hour or longer to stimulate the inflow of "new" water into the well and effectively clear all the "old" stored water from the well.

Next, have your water tested for bacteria and nitrates. A home test kit from a hardware store may be satisfactory as an initial check. If a positive bacteria result or nitrate level above 10 milligrams per liter (ppm) is found it is recommended that a local state-certified lab do a follow-up water test. Bottled water should be used for drinking in the interim. Keep a record of the water test results so you can compare them from year to year and identify any trends in water quality. This may be particularly important if there is new construction taking place around your summer home. The annual test information may help alert you to potential water quality problems. If tests show the presence of bacteria, first disinfect the well. If the problem is not solved by well disinfection, it may be necessary to install water treatment equipment.

Generally speaking, water pumps, switches, and pressure tanks do not pose any special problems related to seasonal use. However, water-conditioning equipment will require maintenance of some kind on a periodic basis. Read the owner's manual for your system to find out what maintenance is required and what steps (if any) are needed after long-term inactivity. Contact a NHWWA member if you are unsure about how to maintain your equipment. Poorly maintained water treatment systems can concentrate contaminants to unsafe levels and may promote bacteria growth in the treatment system. Keep track of any service performed on the equipment. Recording this information doesn't take much time and may help lead you to the source of any problems.

One of the biggest potential drinking water quality problems for summer home wells is from wastewater disposal. You are advised to make sure that your summer home wastewater system is not overloaded. If you allow your family and guests to use more water than the septic system is designed to handle, there may be a real risk to the groundwater well.

When "closing down" a summer home well, turn off the electricity to your water pump rather than just closing a valve. This will ensure that no water will continually leak from a worn connection valve. Because of winter frost, drain your pipes and remove any water from the treatment system to prevent damage. Also, remove and replace any filters or cartridges from your treatment system and perform any other equipment owner's manual recommendations for long-term inactivity.

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