



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WELLHEAD PROTECTION

Guidance for Developing a Wellhead Protection Program Plan

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

GOAL

The goal of this element is to identify individuals who will help develop and implement the local wellhead protection program and outline their responsibilities. This is generally accomplished by creating a local wellhead protection team and establishing the appropriate role and responsibilities for each team member. Given the dynamic nature of wellhead protection, it is important to acknowledge that roles and responsibilities will change over time and planning for this change is essential.

BACKGROUND

Establishing roles and responsibilities requires building partnerships within your community at all levels of government and with other supporting organizations. One person can often get the process started; however, to ensure long-term success of the program, others need to become involved to provide support. Support can be generated from people within your community and from agencies such as the state, the county health department, and local watershed councils. Together, this team can determine how to tailor a wellhead protection program to meet the needs of the community.

Throughout the process of program development and implementation, individual roles and responsibilities will change. Often, team members will change as new parts of the program are addressed and as people are promoted, elected, retire, or leave the community. This dynamic aspect of wellhead protection emphasizes the importance of a team approach. The team can provide consistency in the program and ensure its continuance over time.

POTENTIAL TEAM MEMBERS

Within a Community

Once members of a local government decide to pursue wellhead protection it is their responsibility to develop and implement a plan. A person at the local level must take the lead on the program (a responsibility that may be given to another as the program evolves), determine who needs to become involved and establish a funding source or financial strategy. The local government is also responsible for updating the program at least once every three years. People who are commonly involved in wellhead protection at the local level include:

- Village, city, or township manager
- Water plant superintendent
- Director of public utilities
- City engineer
- Fire chief
- Retired senior volunteers
- Business/Industry owners
- School teachers
- Students
- Home owners
- Village, city and township planning boards and commissions

At the State Level of Government

The state's responsibility to local governments is to provide technical assistance and guidance during program development and to review and approve programs which meet the state criteria. The state is also responsible for integrating wellhead protection with existing programs which may be modified to support the protection of ground water. For example, it has been proposed by the Department of Environmental Quality, Waste and Hazardous Materials Division, that all new underground storage tanks located within a wellhead protection area receive secondary containment. Many additional coordination efforts are currently underway to help local governments more effectively implement their programs. State departments which should be contacted in order to provide assistance include:

- Department of Environmental Quality
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Transportation

Please obtain the additional guidance materials for details on specific divisions within each department to contact for more information.

At the Regional Level

Regional agencies can provide a great deal of support to communities beginning wellhead protection. Most agencies have a working knowledge of existing land use and management in their area and are generally interested in providing support to help protect a drinking water supply. Agencies or organizations to consider contacting to support your local wellhead protection program include:

- Neighboring village, city, or township offices
- County health department
- Watershed council
- Groundwater Education in Michigan (GEM) Center
- Regional Council of Governments (SEMCOG, NEMCOG, NWMCOG)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- MSU Extension
- Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Universities
- Michigan Townships Association
- Michigan Society of Planning Officials
- Michigan Rural Water Association
- Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association
- Michigan Water Environment Association

At the Local Level

After reviewing this list, local agencies, organizations, or people may come to mind that should be included on the team. Most communities have interested citizens and unique individuals who have lived in the area for years and can contribute greatly to the success of the program. A local team should consist of not less than three people with representation by the public water supply superintendent, the municipality, and representation from at least one of the groups listed above.