



FACT SHEET

OFFICE OF DRINKING WATER & MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE – ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE CENTER 800-662-9278

CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO HIRING A WELL CONTRACTOR

Do you need a water well for the new home you're building? Does your existing well or pumping equipment need to be replaced? Here is some helpful information to assist you when hiring a water well driller or pump installer.

Does Michigan have water well construction standards?

Yes. Michigan's well construction code is based on the public health principle that if a well is properly located, constructed of suitable materials, and pumping equipment is correctly installed, the water system should provide a safe, reliable supply of water.

Some counties have ordinances that are more stringent than the state well construction code and all counties require that a permit be obtained before drilling a well or performing major repairs. Permits are required by state law for most wells that serve to the public or private citizens. Check with your county health department before proceeding.

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) registers water well drilling contractors and pump installers. Minimum experience qualifications and an extensive examination help ensure that only knowledgeable individuals become registered.

How to select a well drilling contractor

A new well and pump costs several thousand dollars. Before deciding who to hire, do a little homework to compare quality and value. It will be time "well" spent. To verify if a contractor is registered, ask to see a current registration certificate. State registration can be verified online by visiting the DEQ website at: www.michigan.gov/deqwaterwellconstruction and clicking on "Directory of Registered Contractors."

Check the contractors reputation by contacting past customers. Find out if the contractor completed the work satisfactorily and in a timely manner. A reputable contractor will have no objection to giving you a list of customers' names upon request.

Questions to ask the contractor

- ✓ What will be the depth of my new well? (A contractor cannot always predict the final depth, but depths of nearby wells offer some guidance.)
- ✓ Are there water quality or quantity problems in my area?
- ✓ Will the water be tested and will I be given a copy of the water test results?
- ✓ Will a well record be given to me within 60 days of completion, as required by state law? (A well record shows the well construction details and formations penetrated. It is useful if future well service is needed and during real estate transfers.)
- ✓ Do I still pay if no water is found, if not enough water is found, or if poor quality water is obtained? If so, how much is charged?
- ✓ How much will it cost to plug my abandoned well? (A well no longer in use can be a channel for contamination and can adversely impact your new well and others.)
- ✓ Do you use written estimates and contracts for our mutual protection?
- ✓ Do you carry insurance to protect both of us?
- ✓ Will I be given a detailed billing invoice?
- ✓ Will the contractor obtain the well permit from the local health department or will that be my responsibility?
- ✓ How much site restoration will be done? (Well drilling rigs and support vehicles can make large ruts in lawns. The drilling process can be messy. Make sure you know what the contractor will do and what you will be expected to do.)

Know what to expect: check well records.

Records of other wells completed in your vicinity are an indicator of what you can expect. There are two websites where well records can be viewed:

Wellogic (2000 and newer)

<https://secure1.state.mi.us/wellogic/Login.aspx>

All of the Wellogic records can be searched for by using 22 different search fields.

Scanned Well Records (1999 and older)

www.deq.state.mi.us/well-logs

The scanned well records can only be search for by county, township, town/range, and section.

Make sure that you, the contractor, and the local health department sanitarian are in agreement over the location of the new well. A well must be located where it is not subject to contamination and where it is accessible for maintenance. The driller must be able to get a drilling rig set up while avoiding overhead or buried utility lines. The location you had in mind may not be far enough from contamination sources such as septic systems, sewer lines, and fuel storage tanks. If you are having a well drilled to replace a contaminated well, be sure to let the well drilling contractor know. Tell the contractor about any special water needs you have. If you plan to install a lawn irrigation system, the contractor must know beforehand so the water system can be properly designed.

Good communication between you and the well drilling contractor is the key to successful job completion!

Got a complaint?

Usually the well installation will be completed satisfactorily. However, if the work was not performed to your satisfaction, discuss your concerns with the contractor. Most often when you bring your problem to the attention of the business, you will find them willing to listen to your complaint and eager to settle it to your satisfaction. When you talk to the contractor, remember:

- Be calm and courteous.
- Explain the problem accurately and state how you think it should be handled.
- In many disputes neither side is entirely correct.
- If you are willing to negotiate, say so.
- If your attempt to resolve the problem fails, you may file a written complaint with the local health department. You may wish to advise the contractor that you intend to file a complaint.

How to file a complaint

A written complaint can be filed by contacting your county or district health department. If your complaint involves violation of the well construction code, it is within the health department's authority and an investigation will be made. The health department will assist in getting the violation corrected.

The health department has no power to investigate or mediate certain types of complaints. These include:

- pricing or "overcharging"
- product warranties
- damage to property
- contractual disputes

For information or assistance on this publication, please contact the Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance, through the DEQ's Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278. This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

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