NEMO NEVADA

"Protecting water quality through community planning"

Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials

Fact Sheet-06-51

POW: Protecting Our Water ACTION GUIDE SERIES
ACTION GUIDE #10

What to Do About Private Water Wells

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Many homeowners in Nevada have private water wells on their property for domestic or household use. It is important to protect the wellhead and the land surrounding the wellhead from contamination. It is also important to have your well regularly inspected and the well water regularly tested. No federal drinking water standards exist for privately owned domestic-use water wells. You are responsible for the safety of the drinking water you and your family consume.

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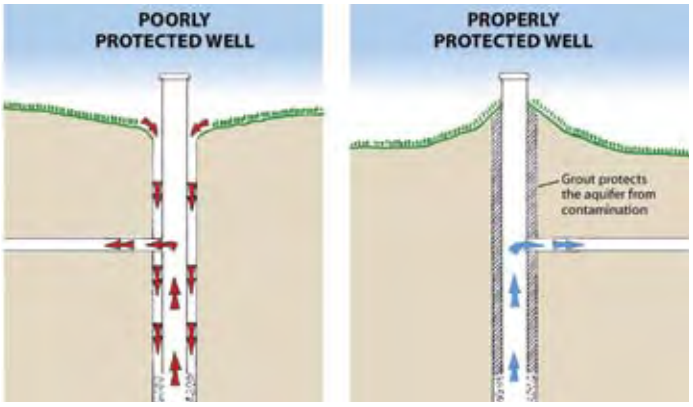
The following suggestions may help you to protect your well and your drinking water supply:

- Have your well water tested regularly. Water should be tested at least once a year for total coliform bacteria and at least every three years for nitrate, pH and total dissolved solids (TDS), also referred to as "routine domestic analysis." DO NOT rely on your neighbor's water well test information. Adjacent water wells do not necessarily draw water from the same aquifer.
- Keep records of all well repairs and routine maintenance. Keep copies of all well inspections, including those you do yourself. Also keep copies of all water testing done on your well. This will help you track any changes in water quality.
- Treat the well water for bacterial contamination any time the well is worked on.
- Make sure your well is properly sealed. A minimum 50-foot-deep concrete collar is required around the well casing to prevent contamination from entering the aquifer. The top of the well casing should be capped and at least 12 inches above the finished grade of the site. If the area is susceptible to flooding, make sure the top of the well casing is 1 to 2 feet above the highest recorded flood level.



- Contaminated water
- Uncontaminated water

In a properly protected well, surface contamination is minimized.

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MORE TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR WELL AND YOUR DRINKING WATER SUPPLY:

➡ Make sure any unused wells on your property have been correctly abandoned. These wells should be sealed to prevent them from contaminating the well you are currently using.

➡ Make sure all contamination sources are located at least 100 feet away from the wellhead. This distance is called the Wellhead Protection Area, or WHPA. If your soil is very sandy, you may want to increase that distance.

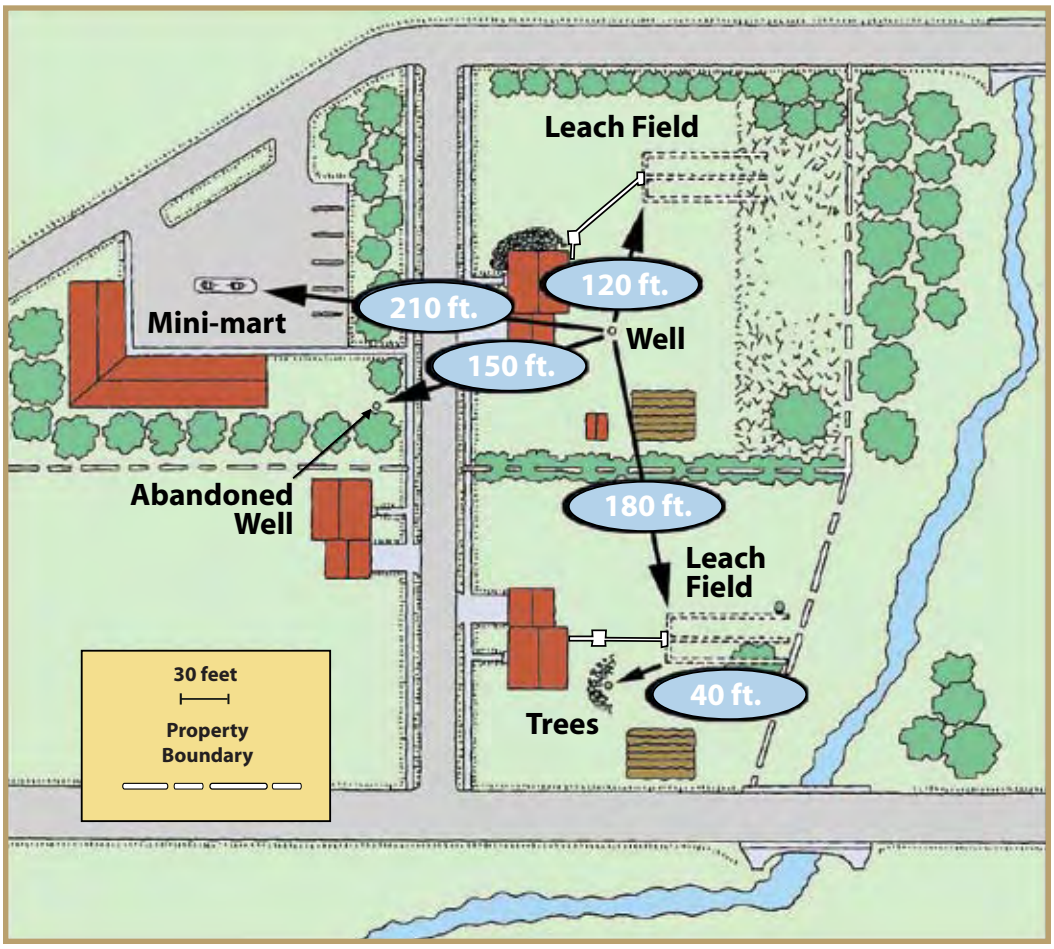
➡ Do not store fuels, solvents, degreasers, paint products, pesticides, fertilizers, or other potentially harmful substances in the well house. These substances should be stored outside the WHPA.

➡ Do not place a corral, paddock, dog run, or other animal habitation on or within 100 feet of the wellhead. Do not park or drive vehicles near the wellhead.

➡ Try to keep any potential pollution sources downhill, not uphill, of the wellhead.

➡ Plant any new trees at least 25 feet away from your wellhead.

➡ Make sure your septic system, including the tank and the leach field, is located 100 feet or more away from the wellhead. If you have to relocate your septic system, make sure the new site meets the 100-foot criteria. Don't forget to consider the location of your neighbor's septic tank and leach field.



The property in the upper-right-hand corner of this diagram illustrates the 100-foot minimum distance you should try to maintain between your well and any potential contamination sources, including your well and your neighbors' wells. Note that the domestic well is over 200 feet from the gasoline storage tanks at the nearby mini-mart, and 150 feet away from the abandoned well. It is also 120 feet away from the septic system.

For more information:

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