

# Frequently Asked Questions about Wells

## What is required to install a private well?

[North Carolina General Statute 87-97](#) requires counties to have programs for permitting, inspecting, and testing of private drinking water wells, which are constructed, repaired, or abandoned, on or after July 1, 2008. As a result, New Hanover County Environmental Health enforces state statutes and rules and receive technical and legal assistance from North Carolina's Environmental Health Section. The program is designed to protect human health and groundwater quality by ensuring private drinking water wells are properly constructed, repaired, and abandoned.

## Why do I have to obtain a permit to construct or repair my well?

Obtaining a permit enables the health departments' staff to ensure wells are properly located, constructed, and repaired, so that water quality and public health are protected. Additionally, obtaining a permit to construct or repair a well is required by [North Carolina General Statute 87-97](#) and [North Carolina Administrative Code, 15A NCAC 02C .0300](#).

## How does public health make final approval of wells?

To approve wells, public health conducts:

- head inspections to determine proper capping and sealing of well top to prevent Site evaluations to determine suitable areas for well placement.
- Grouting inspections to determine sufficient amount of grout (cement) outside of the well casing.
- Well outside contamination from entering the well. Thorough disinfections of the well must be completed once the well head is completed and prior to use.

## I think I have a problem with my well water quality; who should I contact?

You may contact New Hanover County Environmental Health at 910-798-6667. For a fee, they can provide water quality testing, or you can contact a private agency many of which are located online.

## How far away should my well be from my septic system, petroleum tank or any other potential contaminant?

The minimum horizontal separation between a water supply well and potential sources of groundwater contamination vary depending on the type of potential source. For instance, the state's horizontal separation distance (setback) mandates 100 feet from a septic system or drain field. However, if setbacks cannot be achieved at the minimum distances, there can be remedies under certain conditions. Specific details concerning contaminant levels and setbacks are found in [15A NCAC 02C .0107](#).

## Do I need a permit for an irrigation well?

The State's well program is designed for private drinking water wells. Currently, New Hanover County does not have a separate rule to address irrigation or any other type of well.

### **If Environmental Health determines a potential contaminant plume is located on my property, can I drill a water well?**

Environmental Health will determine, to the best of their ability and with the information available to them from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) data, the potential for contamination and will work with the NC Division of Environmental Quality to determine well depth, setbacks, and grouting requirements. This will include water treatment devices to be installed depending on the containment.

### **I have an old well that I haven't used in years. What should I do if anything?**

Any well that does not meet present day well construction standards is a potential conduit for groundwater contamination. As a result, such a well must be repaired (if possible) or abandoned in accordance with state rules. Temporarily abandoned wells must be fitted with a watertight cap. Permanently abandoned wells are typically filled with cement or bentonite grout. For specific details, see [15A NCAC 02C.0113](#).

### **Do I need to get a permit to abandon my well?**

State rules require that you go through the permitting application process before you can abandon your well. This process serves as notification to the county that your well is going to be abandoned and allows the environmental health department staff to ensure abandonment procedures are correctly performed. There is no cost to the well owner when applying for or being issued a well abandonment permit.

**Note:** All questions related to underground storage tanks (UST) should be directed to DEQ's UST program: [www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/waste-management/ust](http://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/waste-management/ust).