



INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2005ENV0091-000968
Oct. 28, 2005

Ministry of Environment

NEW STANDARDS TAKE EFFECT FOR PRIVATE WELL OWNERS

VICTORIA – Groundwater is one of British Columbia’s most important natural resources, with more than 750,000 British Columbians getting their drinking water from wells. B.C.’s new Ground Water Protection Regulation – which will improve the safety and quality of the province’s groundwater supplies – comes into full effect on Nov. 1, 2005.

The regulation, part of the Province’s Action Plan for Safe Drinking Water, establishes standards to ensure wells are properly drilled, sealed, maintained and closed. Wells that are not properly constructed or closed pose a risk to drinking water quality.

Private well owners need to be aware of the new regulation and how it applies to them:

- Water wells must now be constructed by qualified well drillers.
- Pumps for water wells must be installed by qualified well pump installers.
- Well drillers and well pump installers must register with the provincial government. A registry of qualified drillers and pump installers can be found online at wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/wat/gws/gwis.html. (Registered well drillers and well pump installers will have a Provincial identification card.)

Beginning on Nov. 1, 2005, new water supply wells need to be constructed to at least the minimum standards in the Ground Water Protection Regulation. All new water supply wells must have:

- A surface seal to prevent any contaminated surface water from entering the well;
- A secure well cap;
- A minimum clearance of one foot from the top of the well casing to the ground surface and grading to drain surface water away from the wellhead; and
- A well identification plate.

Private well owners will need to maintain their wells to keep them safe and sanitary. This means ensuring the well stays securely capped, the surface seal is not damaged, the wellhead is not altered and the well identification plate is visible. If the well identification plate is lost or damaged, the well owner needs to contact the Ministry of Environment for a replacement plate, free of charge.

Owners of existing wells (constructed before Nov. 1, 2005) must ensure a secure well cap, or well cap and cover, is installed by Oct. 31, 2007. A well cap prevents contaminants from getting into the well and reduces the danger of a child or animal falling into the well. If a well is not in use, the well owner is required to deactivate or close the well. Deactivating a well means capping, securing and protecting the well while it is not in use. Closing a well means filling the well in with backfill and sealant. Only qualified well drillers can close drilled wells.

By following this regulation, well owners are protecting their own and their neighbours' well water supply and helping to keep groundwater resources healthy and clean for future generations. For more information on the regulation, or to find a qualified well driller or well pump installer, contact your local Ministry of Environment office, or check online at: wapwww.gov.bc.ca/wat/gws/gwis.html.

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