

Basic Information

By Darrel Lockard

I have always been told that mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, painters, ect., will always work on their own stuff last. I find as a home owner that this is true even for me. You would think that I would know better by now. For example, my wife and I bought a hot tub last year, and we were really looking forward to enjoying the relaxing time soaking in it. When I went to fill it up I wanted to cheat a little and use the hot water from our home hot water tank so we could use it quicker. Unfortunately, since I had not been doing my maintenance like I should, my hot water tank had not been cleaned out and thus rusty colored water came out of the hose. We had to clean the new hot tub and flush the hot water heater too. I know that it is suggested to flush the hot water tank at least once a year and more if needed. MY BAD!

Many homeowners (myself included) tend to forget the value of good maintenance until problems reach crisis levels. That can be very expensive, and it will always be at the most inconvenient time. It's better to maintain your well, find problems early, and correct them to protect your well's performance. Keep up-to-date records of well installation and repairs plus pumping and water tests. Such records can help spot changes and possible problems with your water system. I have never remembered when I have done anything to my well unless I use a log of sorts to refresh my memory. If you have problems, check your well construction and maintenance records. It may eliminate some potential sources of problems.

Additionally, you should protect your own well area. We are always so careful where we work, but we should also remember the basics for ourselves and our families. Be careful about storage and disposal of household and lawn care chemicals and wastes. Good farmers and gardeners minimize the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Regularly check underground storage tanks that hold home heating oil, diesel, or gasoline. Make sure your well is protected from the wastes of livestock, pets, and wildlife.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates public water systems; it does not have the

authority to regulate private drinking water wells. Approximately 15 percent of Americans rely on their own private drinking water supplies, and these supplies are not subject to EPA standards, although some state and local governments do set rules to protect users of these wells. Our state does not regulate our private wells. Unlike public drinking water systems serving many people, they do not have experts (that's us) regularly checking the water's source and its quality before it is sent to the tap. These households must take special precautions to ensure the protection and maintenance of their drinking water supplies. Proper well construction and continued maintenance are keys to the safety of your water supply.

To keep your well safe, you must be sure possible sources of contamination are not close by. Experts suggest keeping minimum distances for protection — farther is better and these distances can be found from the building and plumbing codes. I live on a small acre area and would not have thought of all of these, yet I know there are many more.

- Septic Tanks
- Livestock yards, Silos, Septic Leach Fields
- Petroleum Tanks, Liquid-Tight Manure Storage and Fertilizer Storage and Handling
- Manure Stacks

Improper disposal of many common products can pollute ground water. These include cleaning solvents, used motor oil, paints, and paint thinners. Even soaps and detergents can harm drinking water. These are often a problem from faulty septic tanks and septic leaching fields. Of course we know this, but do our families, and do they practice proper disposal?

Since passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act, our country has enjoyed one of the safest and cleanest supplies of drinking water in the world. Protecting water at the source is the first critical step in a multiple-barrier approach that also includes treatment for contaminants, monitoring to ensure that health-based standards are met, and adequate infrastructure maintenance. An informed public with an understanding that everybody plays a role in water protection is critical to protecting our drinking water now and for the future. We know this. If you have your own well do the same for yourself as you do for the public.