Water Wells
Private Drinking
Should Know About
What Every Realtor

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New England
CERES
United States Environmental Protection Agency
If you are a real estate agent representing the buyer or the seller, you may have a question about how you can best inform your client about private well water issues during a property transaction. This brochure will help to answer your questions.

Knowledge is Power!

Advise your client to get the most information possible from qualified professionals about both the well water quality and the condition and functioning of the pumping equipment. The only way to identify the presence of hazardous chemicals or bacteria in the water is through testing. If a problem is found, it is best to contact the appropriate state agency, listed in the For More Information section at the end of this brochure.

The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Water Quality Program has an extensive private well web page with fact sheets and a program calendar offering private well education workshops. See www.uri.edu/ce/wq and click on the Rhode Island Home*A*Syst Program link.

For technical assistance and other information including health concerns, testing recommendations for private well owners, factsheets, and diagrams on proper installation of wells, contact the Vermont Department of Health at (802) 863-7220 or (800) 439-8550 from within Vermont.

For more information about laboratory testing services; water testing; or to order test kits, contact the Vermont Public Health Laboratory at (802) 863-7335 or, from within Vermont, (800) 660-9997.

For information on Vermont Licensed Well Drillers, contact the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Supply Division at (802) 241-3400 or (800) 823-6500 (from within Vermont).
If the property’s private well has taste and odor problems, the prospective buyer may hesitate to make an offer on the property. Encourage your seller to have the well tested for bacteria and other problematic contaminants and install water treatment if needed.

To protect their health, private well owners should periodically test their well water to ensure the quality of their drinking water. It is best to have the well water tested annually for at least bacteria, nitrate and nitrite. Other contaminants, like arsenic, should be tested for on a less frequent or as needed basis.

Avoid Delays! Avoid Delays! Avoid Delays! Avoid Delays! Avoid Delays!

Testing and inspection prior to listing a property will help avoid delays in selling the home. Even though the potential buyer’s lending institution will most likely require testing and inspection, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services recommends that homeowners arrange to have their private wells tested annually.

Safe water can be a selling point! If there are any objections to testing and inspecting the water system, you can advise your client that a house with a system in disrepair or with contaminants present in the water is worth less money on the market and can take longer to sell. Just like a house with a bad roof or peeling paint, a house with a system that is not functioning properly is worth less money and will be a place of comfort for the new homeowner. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has a website with extensive information on water systems and their maintenance. To order a listing of registered well drillers and pump installers, visit www.des.state.nh.us/wseb.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services recommends that homeowners arrange to have their private wells tested annually. For information concerning laboratory testing of water samples, please call an independent certified laboratory in NH or the state laboratory at 603-271-3445. For information concerning water quality, treatment, and questions concerning the public drinking water program, please call 603-271-2513. For health-related information, please call 603-271-4608. For information on wells, water quantity, and licensed well drillers, please call 603-271-3213. For information regarding public drinking water systems and their maintenance, please call the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services at 603-271-3445. For information concerning laboratories conducting the public drinking water testing program, please call 603-271-3213. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has a website with extensive information on water systems and their maintenance. To order a listing of registered well drillers and pump installers, visit www.des.state.nh.us/wseb.

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Department of Health recommends that homeowners arrange to have their private wells tested annually. For information on private drinking water well testing at time of real estate sale and information on testing and state certified laboratories, contact your local community’s code enforcement program. Some NH communities have local testing requirements. Contact your local community’s code enforcement program for a list of wells. For health-related information, please call 603-271-4608. For information on wells, water quantity, and licensed well drillers, please call 603-271-3213. For information regarding public drinking water systems and their maintenance, please call 603-271-3213. For information concerning laboratories conducting the public drinking water testing program, please call 603-271-3213.
What tests should be conducted?

While this recommendation may vary from state to state, generally, the EPA suggests that an initial test should include coliform bacteria, nitrates/nitrites, and pH. In addition, the buyer's lending institution will most likely require that the well pass a water quality test prior to loan approval. Most lenders require testing for bacteria, nitrates, and lead to ensure that the water is not at a level that requires treatment. However, testing is not necessarily required to protect the health of the residents. The testing is not necessary for the repossession of the property. While the EPA recommends different tests to detect specific contaminants, the most common tests are intended to test for coliform bacteria, nitrates, and lead. The testing is not necessarily required to protect the health of the residents. The testing is not necessary for the repossession of the property.

Where should the samples be taken?

The water sample should be collected from the cold water kitchen tap. Most water testing laboratories supply their own sample containers and provide detailed instructions on how to collect the sample. The instructions to obtain a good sample. In some cases, a laboratory professional may come to the home and collect the sample. For more information on specific testing suggestions in your state, contact the appropriate state agency.

For information on state certified laboratories in Massachusetts, see the Drinking Water Program at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Extension website. For more information about types of wells, maintaining wells, and water quality issues and testing well water, visit the UMass Extension website. For information on state certified laboratories in Massachusetts, see the Drinking Water Program at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Extension website.

For information on state certified laboratories in Maine, contact the Drinking Water Program in the Division of Health Engineering, Department of Human Services (207) 287-1929. For information on state certified laboratories in Maine, contact the Drinking Water Program in the Division of Health Engineering, Department of Human Services (207) 287-1929. For information on state certified laboratories in Maine, contact the Drinking Water Program in the Division of Health Engineering, Department of Human Services (207) 287-1929. For information on state certified laboratories in Maine, contact the Drinking Water Program in the Division of Health Engineering, Department of Human Services (207) 287-1929.

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If there is a home water treatment system, a water test should be done on both the raw water coming into the house before the treatment system and a separate test after the water treatment system. This will identify the contaminants that are present and ensure that the treatment system is functioning properly.

Are there specific state requirements?

State requirements for private well testing at the time of property sale vary from state to state. It is best to check with the state drinking water agency for requirements. In some cases, you may need a professional to the home to collect instructions and collection bottles for taking the water sample. It is crucial to test for the contaminants that are present in the area. You should contact your local health department or state agency about any known contamination problems in the area to assist in determining what contaminants to test for.

What else should I know about water testing?

Prior to obtaining a water sample for testing, advise your client to confirm that the well has no chlorine in it. The well may have prior chlorine from disinfection or chlorination. If the water contains chlorine, it is not suitable for testing.

For more information:

www.epa.gov/newengland/eco/drinkwater/private_well_owners.html
U.S. EPA New England Region Water Quality Program
www.epa.gov/newengland/eco/drinkwater/private_well Owners.html

Where should the water be tested?

Your client should arrange to have the water tested at a state certified lab. These labs follow accepted procedures for testing contaminants. Make sure that the lab is certified by the state health department.

www.epa.gov/newengland/eco/drinkwater/private_well_owners.html
U.S. EPA New England Region Water Quality Program
www.epa.gov/newengland/eco/drinkwater/private_well_owners.html

For information and education programs on private well water protection and education programs on private well water quality, contact the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s Private Well Water Quality Program at 860-509-7333 or by accessing the DWD’s website.

www.epa.gov/newengland/eco/drinkwater/private_well_owners.html
U.S. EPA New England Region Water Quality Program
www.epa.gov/newengland/eco/drinkwater/private_well_owners.html
been chlorinated because of a failing bacteria or other test. Chlorine would mask the presence of bacteria and other contaminants that may be present in the well water. A good chemical test kit can confirm whether chlorine is present if unknown bacteria or other test

The EPA establishes limits on the concentrations of certain contaminants that would pose a public health threat if present in elevated levels in public drinking water supplies. These limits, known as Standards, are designed to protect public health by ensuring good quality water. However, a well producing less than 5 gallons per minute is still considered low yielding and may not be able to keep up with demands being placed on it at the same time. Water-use chores may need to be spread out over the week to limit the pressures of these standards on the community's water supply. Chlorine would mask the presence of bacteria and other contaminants that may be present in the well water. A good chemical test kit can confirm whether chlorine is present if unknown bacteria or other test
private drinking water. For more information on drinking water quality standards, visit EPA’s website: [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater).

State drinking water agencies may also set advisory levels for some contaminants, such as sodium, that are either stricter than the federal standards or that are not covered by the federal standards.

Are there any other parts of the water system that need to be inspected?

Yes. In addition to a well water test, the mechanical workings of the water system should also be inspected. This includes the well pump, pressure tank, water treatment system (should one be present), and the well itself. The well log or drilling report may contain the information on the age of the well, the type of well, its depth, and maintenance records. The current homeowner may have detailed and maintenance records and construction information in the well log as well. In addition to a well water test, the mechanical workings of the water system should also be inspected to ensure the proper operation of the system.

What are the costs for inspection?

The inspection fee for a typical one-family house varies geographically, as does housing costs. The knowledge gained from an inspection is well worth the cost. When selecting an inspector or inspector, the inspector should be a registered well driller or pump installer. The inspector should be knowledgeable about the well, the type of well, its depth, and maintenance records. The current homeowner may have detailed and maintenance records. The current homeowner may have detailed and maintenance records and construction information in the well log as well.

For household needs, private water will produce enough water.

Water standards and professional organizations, such as the National Association of Home Inspectors, recommend that water quality standards be evaluated by the local health department. For more information on drinking water quality standards, visit EPA’s website: [www.epa.gov/safewater].

Determining the well type—whether dug, driven, or drilled—can often be done by a visual inspection of the well. For more information on well types, see the University of Rhode Island factsheet [Drinking Water Wells](http://www.uri.edu/ce/wq/has/html/Drinking.pdf).
Water standards as guidelines when evaluating the quality of private drinking water. For more information on drinking water quality standards, visit EPA's website: www.epa.gov/safewater

State drinking water agencies may also set advisory levels for some contaminants, such as sodium, that are either stricter than the federal standards or that are not covered by the federal standards.

Where states have primary well construction regulations that

more than necessity to consider the test.

In addition to a well water test, the mechanical workings of the water system should also be inspected. This includes the well pump, pressure tank, water treatment system (if one is used), and the well's location. The well itself should be inspected to ensure tight construction. Also, the well's location should not be subject to flooding. It is important to advise your client to rely on qualified professionals to conduct the inspection. Qualified home inspectors can inspect the plumbing system, such as general age, appearance, and performance of the piping, storage tank, and/or other water system appliances. For any inspection or work on the well, it is recommended to contract with a registered well driller or pump installer.

What are the costs for inspection?

The inspection fee for a typical one-family house varies geographically, as does the cost of housing. The knowledge gained from an inspection is well worth the cost. When selecting an inspector, the qualifications, including experience, training, and professional affiliations, should be an important consideration.

Determining the well type—whether dug, driven, or drilled—can often be done by a visual inspection of the well or drill hole. Often, the current homeowner may have testing and maintenance records, and well construction information (also known as a well log, a water well record, or a drilling report). Most states require these records or a drilling report. These records and well construction information are also known as a drill hole log. The current homeowner may have testing and maintenance records and well construction information on the private well. When does your client determine if the private well will produce enough water for household needs?

Where does your client get information on the age of the private well, the type of well, its depth, and maintenance records?

The current homeowner may have testing and maintenance records, and well construction information (also known as a well log, a water well record, or a drilling report). Most states require these records or a drilling report. These records and well construction information are also known as a drill hole log. The current homeowner may have testing and maintenance records and well construction information on the private well. When does your client determine if the private well will produce enough water for household needs?
Water is safe to drink

Once the testing is done, the state drinking water agency contacts for more information. A broad range of tests covering a wide spectrum of parameters, from individual test parameter (like pH) to $2.50 or more for a combination test results, can range from $5 to $30 to as high as $250 or more for a combination of tests covering a wide spectrum of parameters. The costs vary by location and how much the test will cost will vary by location and how much the test will cost will vary by location and how much the test will cost will vary by location.

What is the cost for testing?

The potential for contaminants entering a well depends on the distance from potential sources. The potential for contaminants entering a well depends on the distance from potential sources. The potential for contaminants entering a well depends on the distance from potential sources. The potential for contaminants entering a well depends on the distance from potential sources.

How does my client determine if the well is properly located away from potential contamination sources?

The well is properly located away from potential contamination sources, if the well is located in the current or former mining areas, or if it is located more than 50 feet from any other well.

Water treatment and disposal. Water treatment and disposal. Water treatment and disposal. Water treatment and disposal.

Water is safe to drink because of chlorine. Chlorine is an effective disinfectant that can destroy bacteria and other microorganisms. Chlorine is added to drinking water to ensure that the water is safe to drink. Chlorine is added to drinking water to ensure that the water is safe to drink. Chlorine is added to drinking water to ensure that the water is safe to drink. Chlorine is added to drinking water to ensure that the water is safe to drink. Chlorine is added to drinking water to ensure that the water is safe to drink.

The EPA establishes limits on the concentrations of certain contaminants in public drinking water supplies. These limits, called health-based standards, are set to protect public health by ensuring good quality drinking water. The EPA establishes limits on the concentrations of certain contaminants in public drinking water supplies. These limits, called health-based standards, are set to protect public health by ensuring good quality drinking water. The EPA establishes limits on the concentrations of certain contaminants in public drinking water supplies. These limits, called health-based standards, are set to protect public health by ensuring good quality drinking water. The EPA establishes limits on the concentrations of certain contaminants in public drinking water supplies. These limits, called health-based standards, are set to protect public health by ensuring good quality drinking water.

Chlorine would mask the presence of bacteria and other contaminants that may be present in the well water. A pool chemical test kit prior to sample collection will ensure the continuation of checking for chlorine each time a sample is collected.

What are the costs for testing? The costs for testing will vary by location and how much the test will cost will vary by location and how much the test will cost will vary by location and how much the test will cost will vary by location.

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If there is a home water treatment system, a water test should be done on the raw water coming into the house before the treatment system and after the water has passed through the treatment system. This will identify any contaminants that are present and ensure that the treatment system is functioning properly.

Water testing requirements

Are there any specific state or federal laws that are relevant to the sampled water?

Connecticut Department of Public Health

Connecticut’s private well water quality regulations are contained in Public Health Code Section 19-13-B101. Connecticut’s private well water quality regulations are in Section 19-13-B101 of Connecticut’s Public Health Code. The regulations are contained in a state agency about any known contamination problems in the area to assist in determining what contaminants to test for.

What should I know about water testing?

Prior to obtaining a water sample for testing, advise your client to confirm that the well has no chlorine in it. The well may have been disinfected recently.

For more information, contact the Department of Public Health or your state’s drinking water agency.

What else should I know about water testing?

Connecticut has a new campaign to get the word out to homeowners about the importance of testing their private well water regularly. Through this campaign, homeowners can learn about the proper steps to take to protect their water supplies and stay informed about any new regulations or guidelines that may affect their well water supply.

For more information, visit the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s website at http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Water/DWD.htm.
What tests should be conducted?

While this recommendation may vary from state to state, the EPA suggests that an initial test should include coliform bacteria, nitrates/nitrites, and pH. In addition, the following tests should be considered:

- Bacteria: To check for the presence of pathogens that can cause illness
- Nitrates/Nitrites: To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Lead/Antimony: To check for levels that may cause health problems in children and adults
- Fluoride: To check for levels that may cause dental fluorosis or bone problems
- Arsenic: To check for levels that may cause cancer or other health problems
- Barium: To check for levels that may cause cancer or other health problems
- Cadmium: To check for levels that may cause cancer or other health problems
- Copper: To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Mercury: To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Nitrates/Nitrites: To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Nitrate: To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Phosphate (PO₄): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Sodium (Na): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Chloride (Cl): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Sulfate (SO₄): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- AR (Arsenite): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Br (Bromide): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- I (Iodide): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Li (Lithium): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Mg (Magnesium): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- Na (Sodium): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- NH₃ (Ammonia): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- SO₃ (Sulfate): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- TDS (Total Dissolved Solids): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- TTHM (Total Trihalomethanes): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- THM (Trihalomethanes): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns
- MTBE (Methyl tert-Butyl Ether): To check for levels that may cause health problems in infants, particularly newborns

Where should the samples be taken?

The water sample should be collected from the cold water kitchen tap. Most water testing laboratories supply their own sample containers and provide detailed instructions on how to collect the sample. The samples should be collected in sample containers supplied by the testing laboratory.

For more information on state certified laboratories in Massachusetts, visit the Massachusetts Drinking Water Program's website.

www.mass.gov/agent/health/water/}

For information on state certified laboratories in Maine, contact the Drinking Water Program in the Division of Health Engineering, Department of Human Services (207) 287-1929.

www.umaine.edu/waterquality/
If the property’s private well has taste and odor problems, the prospective buyer may hesitate to make an offer on the property. Encourage your seller to have the well tested for bacteria and other problematic contaminants and install water treatment if needed.

To protect their health, private well owners should periodically test their well water to ensure the quality of their drinking water. It is best to have the well water tested annually for at least bacteria, nitrate and nitrite. Other contaminants, like arsenic, should be tested for on a less frequent or as needed basis.

Avoid Delays! Testing and inspection prior to listing a property will help avoid delays in selling the home. Even though the potential buyer’s lending institution will most likely require testing and installation of a new or existing water system, the seller should ensure that the property is worth more than the cost of installing a new system with safe drinking water. If there are any objections to testing and inspecting the water system, you can advise your client that a house with a system in disrepair or with contaminants present in the water is worth less money on the market and can take longer to sell. Just like a home with a bad roof or a leaky foundation, a house with a bad water system will be less desirable and can take longer to sell.

Safe water can be a selling point! If there are any objections to testing and inspecting the water system, you can advise your client that a house with a system in disrepair or with contaminants present in the water is worth less money on the market and can take longer to sell. Just like a home with a bad roof or a leaky foundation, a house with a bad water system will be less desirable and can take longer to sell.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has extensive information on its website at: www.des.state.nh.us/wseb

- For information concerning laboratory testing of water samples, please call an independent certified laboratory in NH or the state laboratory at 603-271-3445. For information concerning water quality, treatment, and questions concerning the public drinking water program, please call 603-271-4608.
- For information on wells, water quantity, and licensed well drillers, please call 603-271-5135.
- For health related information, please call 603-271-4608.
- For information concerning the public drinking water program, please call 603-271-5135.

Rhode Island

- For information concerning laboratory testing of water samples, please call (401) 222-6867.
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- For information on wells, water quantity, and licensed well drillers, please call (401) 222-6867.
- For health related information, please call (401) 222-6867.
- For information on water quality test requirements for new housing, contact your local community’s code enforcement program.

Rhode Island Department of Health

Regulations for private drinking water well testing at time of real estate sale and information on testing and state certified laboratories. (401) 222-6867.

www.health.ri.gov/environment/dwq/privatewell.htm

To obtain a listing of registered well drillers and pump installers, regulations pertaining to private drinking water wells, contact the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management at (401) 222-4700 or visit the website. www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/benviron/water/permits/privwell/index.htm

Avoid Delays!

Testing and inspection prior to listing a property will help avoid delays in selling the home. Even though the potential buyer’s lending institution will most likely require testing and installation of a new or existing water system, the seller should ensure that the property is worth more than the cost of installing a new system with safe drinking water.

New Hampshire

www.des.state.nh.us/wseb

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- For information concerning the public drinking water program, please call 603-271-5135.
If you are a real estate agent representing the buyer or the seller, you may have a question about how you can best inform your client about private well water issues during a property transaction. This brochure will help to answer your questions.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), it is estimated that approximately 2.3 million people, or 20% of New Englanders, rely on private wells for their drinking water. Most of the well water quality information available to homeowners is provided by the well owner or water testing laboratory. To protect public health, it is important to have a clear understanding of the well water quality and any potential problems.

**Knowledge is Power!**

Advise your clients to get the most information possible from qualified professionals about both the well water quality and the condition and functioning of the well. It is best to contact the appropriate state agency, listed in the “For More Information” section at the end of this brochure.

- **The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Water Quality Program** has an extensive private well web page with fact sheets and a program calendar offering private well education workshops. See [www.uri.edu/ce/wq](http://www.uri.edu/ce/wq) and click on the Rhode Island Home*A*Syst Program link.

- **Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Supply Division** offers educational materials and workshops on private well water systems. For more information, contact the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Supply Division at (802) 823-6000 (from within Vermont) or (802) 840-0971, or VT Water Quality Hotline: (800) 624-6204.

- **American Ground Water Trust** is a national non-profit educational organization focused on the development of educational programs focusing on private well water systems. The Trust conducts training programs for well owners and education programs for consumers. Visit [www.watersystemscouncil.org](http://www.watersystemscouncil.org) or [www.privatewell.com](http://www.privatewell.com).
What Every Realtor Should Know About Private Drinking Water Wells