

wellcare® information for you about

PROTECTING YOUR WELL

Following the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania in 2001, the nation's water utilities began to prepare risk management and emergency plans to protect the public's water supplies.

The estimated 23 million household wells nationwide should also be prepared in the event of an emergency. By planning ahead, you can ensure the security and reliability of the drinking water from your well.

Should I worry about contamination threats?

The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported not long after the September 11, 2001 attacks that it does not consider contamination of water supplies with deadly biological agents a probable threat. In public supplies, any agent put in the massive water supply would be greatly diluted. Also, utility water treatment systems routinely filter the supply and add chlorine to kill harmful germs.

Private well owners also are unlikely to experience well contamination by biological agents. Groundwater offers a poor target. Groundwater is protected from immediate contamination by its location, typically hundreds of feet below the surface; and it is protected from long-term contamination by its slow rate of movement through the soil, which filters out biological and chemical agents.

As a well owner, you can prevent contamination and monitor your water quality by doing the following:

- Annually test your water quality for contaminants. Keep records to document your water quality over time.
- Test your water as soon as you notice any changes to its taste, color, or odor.
- Protect your well head. Learn its location and inspect for signs of damage or tampering.
- Install a secure well cap or sanitary seal.
- Carefully manage activities near your water source. Avoid mixing or using pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, degreasers, fuels, and other pollutants near the well. Keep hazardous chemicals out of your septic system.

What do I do about disruption of service due to an electrical outage?

The loss of electricity needed to operate the pump on your well represents the greatest vulnerability of your private well system. You can avoid disruptions of service by being prepared. Two simple solutions are to include a water storage tank in your well system and/or have an alternative power source in case of emergency.

Water Storage: The average family of four uses 400 gallons of water each day for all indoor purposes, from drinking to washing clothes and preparing meals. During an emergency, it is recommended to store at least one gallon per person per day for at least three days, mainly to provide water for drinking and flushing toilets manually.

A bulk storage tank can be added to your well system to supply water when the power fails. The tank is usually installed next to your pneumatic water storage tank, which operates on electricity. Water flows continually through the bulk storage tank, so the water will be fresh when it is needed.

A typical storage tank is made of galvanized steel, carbon steel, or fiberglass. It is fitted with a cap at the top, to provide air, and a valve at the bottom to drain the water. Simple gravity allows it to operate when the power is off.

Contact your licensed well contractor more information on water storage tank installation. For a list of licensed well contractors in your area, use our [interactive map on our website](#). If you need help locating a licensed well contractor, contact the wellcare® Hotline at 1-888-395-1033.

Alternative Power Source: A gas or diesel-powered electricity generator can keep your well operating in an emergency. You could buy a small portable generator, at an average cost of approximately \$1,000, just to operate the submersible pump on the water tank. Or you could choose to install a full system generator to operate your well in addition to refrigeration, heating, cooling and other systems in your home.

To determine what size generator you might need, contact your licensed well contractor. A licensed well contractor or pump supplier can help you decide what size generator fits your needs and can recommend a local dealer in portable and on-site generators.

For More Information on Protecting Your Well

Contact your licensed well contractor, local health department, state environmental agency, or the wellcare® Hotline.



Information to help maintain and protect your water well system:

wellcare® is a program of the Water Systems Council (WSC). WSC is the only national organization solely focused on protecting the health and water supply of an estimated 23 million households nationwide who depend on private wells (according to the U.S. EPA).

This publication is one of more than 100 wellcare® information sheets available FREE at www.watersystemscouncil.org.

Well owners and others with questions about wells and well water can contact the wellcare® Hotline at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to fill out a contact form or chat with us live!

JOIN THE WELLCARE® WELL OWNERS NETWORK!

By joining the FREE wellcare® Well Owners Network, you will receive regular information on how to maintain your well and protect your well water.

Contact us at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to join!