

Private Wells Frequently Asked Questions

1. 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, county health departments enforce state statutes and rules and receive technical and legal assistance from the 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.
2. 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 by North Carolina Administrative Code, 15A NCAC 02C .0300.
3. How much does a permit cost?
Permit costs vary from one county to another as each county has the authority to set its own permitting fee. Regardless, the fees are used to cover permit processing and staffing costs, including site visits, well water sampling, laboratory testing, and notification of water analysis results.
4. How do I get a permit to construct or repair my well?
Please contact your county health department and ask about obtaining a well permit to construct or repair your well. Additionally, you will need to fill out a permit application form as part of the permitting process.
5. 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, please see 15A NCAC 02C .0113.
6. 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 health department staff to ensure abandonment procedures are correctly performed. There is generally no cost to the well owner when applying for or being issued a well abandonment permit.
7. I think I have a problem with my well water quality, who should I contact?
Contact your county health department and explain your problem. The county can provide water quality testing for a fee.
8. How far away should my well be from my septic system?
The state's horizontal separation distance (setback) mandates a minimum of 100 feet. However, if you have a well that serves a single family dwelling and due to lot restrictions, you cannot achieve 100 feet, the setback may be reduced to a minimum of 50 feet. Specific details concerning setbacks are found in 15 NCAC 02C .0107. Despite the state setback distances, some counties with their own local well rules may enforce their own setbacks, which are more protective of groundwater or public health.

9. How far away should my well be from my house?
The horizontal separation distance (setback) required by the state mandates a minimum of 25 feet. Specific details concerning setbacks are found in 15A NCAC 02C .0107. Despite state setback distances, counties may enforce their own setbacks, which are more protective of groundwater or public health.
10. What is the difference between state and county well rules?
State well rules are standards established by 15A NCAC 02C. Most county health departments are enforcing state rules. However, some other counties enforce their own rules, which are more protective of groundwater or public health.
11. Do I need to have a permit for a well drilled for a heating, air conditioning, or an irrigation system?
The state's well program is designed for private drinking water wells. However, counties may have their own, separate rules to address other wells. Additionally, based on the type of geothermal or irrigation well you wish to install, you may need to contact the state's Division of Water Quality at 919-733-3221 with permitting questions.