

Drinking Water Quality



Chapter 99 of Benton County's Development Code requires that properties proposed for some kinds of development have wells producing an adequate supply of water that meets coliform and nitrate standards.

Coliform Bacteria Testing

Applicants must submit a copy of a test done within the past 12 months showing that coliform bacteria are absent. Coliform tests are used to indicate potential contamination by bacteria and viruses.

If the test shows that coliforms are present, you will need to shock chlorinate the well. Oregon Water Resources Department's "**Water Well Owner's Handbook**" tells you how and is also an excellent resource for other well issues. Go to www.oregon.gov/OWRD/ and search for "well handbook."

Nitrate Testing

Applicants must submit a copy of a test done within the past 12 months with a nitrate level of 10 parts per million (ppm) or less. High levels can negatively affect pregnant women, infants, and nursing mothers. Nitrates can be an indirect indicator of the presence of pesticides or chemical contaminants.

Well Testing for Real Estate Transactions

The seller of any home in Oregon must send a copy of the arsenic, coliform, and nitrate results to the purchaser and to the Oregon Health Authority. See www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyEnvironments/Pages/index.aspx.



Benton County Environmental Health recommends testing for arsenic and lead.

Arsenic can cause skin damage, stomach pain, numbness in hands and feet, and blindness. Arsenic might also increase the risk of cancer.

Lead can contribute to slow growth, behavior and learning problems, kidney or liver damage, and lowered intelligence. Lead can enter drinking water from faucets, well pumps, and soldered copper pipes. For more information go to epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water.

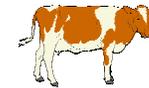
Benton County Environmental Health recommends testing for herbicides and pesticides if you think the groundwater might be contaminated with them.

If you are on a low sodium diet, you can consider testing for sodium.

For aesthetic reasons you can consider testing for iron (which can stain fixtures red), manganese (which can stain fixtures black), hardness (which can make soap foam less and leave a white deposit), and hydrogen sulfide (which has a rotten egg smell).

It is a good idea to test your water every year for coliform bacteria and nitrate, and any time that your water changes in color, odor, taste, etc.

For more information on well water quality, call Oregon Health Authority at 971-673-0440. For more information on contaminants, well protection, a list of certified laboratories, and a well construction diagram, go to the Oregon



Health Authority at public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/SourceWater/DomesticWellSafety

Well Water Protection

If wells are not constructed or maintained properly, they can allow pollutants to go down to the aquifer and contaminate your water.

How you can protect your drinking water:

- Have protective housing around your well.
- Do not allow animals near the well.
- Make sure the well casing extends at least 12 inches above ground and is sealed with a cap on top.
- Make sure the ground slopes away from the well, so that runoff is directed away.
- Do not store chemicals near the well house, and avoid using pesticides and fertilizers near the well house.

Well Identification and Reports

Oregon Water Resources requires that all wells have a well I.D. tag when the land is sold. Benton County enforces this requirement for wells involved with building permits.

If your well has no tag, go to www.oregon.gov/owrd/programs/GWWL/WCC/. Or call Oregon Water Resources at 971-287-8218.

This weblink also has instructions on how to find the well report for your property.

Required Flow for New Dwellings and Places Open to the Public



Benton County Code (BCC) Chapter 99 requires well testing and certain flow rates for wells serving new dwellings or new facilities open to the public.

Property owners should review the “**Water Supply Requirements for Building Permits**” informational handout. This handout and the well testing forms are available at the Benton County Community Development Department (541-766-6819 and comdevinfo@co.benton.or.us) and at www.co.benton.or.us/building/page/water-supply.

Required Flow for Land Divisions

BCC Chapter 99 requires that a sufficient water supply is demonstrated prior to application for most land divisions.

Property owners should review the “**Water Supply Requirements for Partitions and Subdivisions**” informational handout then talk with a County planner (541-766-6819 and comdevinfo@co.benton.or.us). This handout is at www.co.benton.or.us/planning/page/land-use-forms-fees, under “Partitions.”

Meters are recommended to help identify leaks, check the amount used, and (if shared) maintain good neighborly relations.

Springs

BCC 99.820 governs springs. More information can be obtained from Community Development and Oregon Water Resources.



Government Agencies

Benton County Environmental Health
*Small community drinking water systems,
water-related disease investigations,
links to many well water quality sources*
co.benton.or.us/health/page/drinking-water
(541) 766-6841

Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality
Surface & ground water contamination
oregon.gov/deq/wq/
(503) 229-5696
1-800-452-4011

Oregon Water Resources Dept.
*Well logs, well construction, water rights,
ground water contamination,
“Water Well Owner’s Handbook”*
oregon.gov/OWRD/
(503) 986-0900

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
*Private drinking water wells, emergency
preparedness, groundwater, human health*
epa.gov/safewater/privatewells/health.html



Drinking Water Requirements for Development

Publication by Benton County
Community Development Dept.
co.benton.or.us/cd/
(541) 766-6819