

WATER PROGRAM FAQ'S

WELL PERMIT – FAQ

- Q:** How do I obtain a well construction permit?
A: The Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) issues well construction/destruction permits. However, before obtaining a well construction permit, staff from the Department of Environmental Health (Department) will do a review to ensure the proposed well site meets all required setbacks. This review includes a site evaluation at the proposed well site. Go to the [Well Construction Packet](#) for additional information.
- Q:** Where can I obtain the Well Construction Permit Application?
A: The Well Construction Packet is available on the [Drinking Water Program](#) homepage. Go to the [Well Construction Packet](#). This checklist includes the following:

 - DEH Water Well Application
 - SCVWD Well Construction Application
 - Sample Site Plan

Both applications are in a fillable form. Once the applications have been filled out, print a copy of the complete application package. The application package can either be emailed to dehweb@deh.sccgov.org (please send in PDF format if emailing) or mailed to 1555 Berger Drive, Suite 300, San Jose 95112.
- Q:** Where can I get a copy of the well driller's list?
A: Call the Department at (408) 918-3400 and ask for a copy of the list or call the SCVWD at (408) 265-2607 x 2717. The well driller's list can also be found on the [DEH website](#) and the [SCVWD website](#).
- Q:** What is the fee for a well construction review?
A: See our [CPD fee schedule](#), located on our website.
- Q:** How long does it take to get a well permit?
A: The Department reviews the proposed well location and conducts a site visit in approximately five working days after the application and fees are submitted. The application paperwork is then forwarded to the SCVWD. This Department also emails an approval letter to the applicant. The SCVWD takes one to two weeks to issue the construction permit to the well driller listed on the application. Once the well driller receives the permit, they will contact the applicant to schedule the drilling of the well.

6. **Q:** Does it matter if the well is for domestic or agricultural purposes?
A: No. The same application procedure applies to both domestic and agricultural wells.
7. **Q:** Does the Department review SCVWD applications for well destruction or exploratory borings?
A: No. Well destruction applications and applications for exploratory borings are not reviewed by this Department.

WATER CLEARANCE – FAQ

8. **Q:** What is water clearance?
A: Water clearance is a one-time review of a water system (1-4 connections) to ensure the required quantity and quality of water is available for a domestic source.
9. **Q:** When is water clearance required?
A: Water Clearance is required for certain property development projects. Typically, water clearance is needed for new property development (single family homes, secondary dwellings) and those properties going through building site approval.
10. **Q:** How do I obtain water clearance?
A: The Department will issue a water clearance once the well has been drilled and water quality and quantity tests have been performed. For more detailed information, see the following: [Individual Well Clearance Packet](#), [Shared Well Clearance Packet](#), [State Small Water System Clearance](#), or [Spring Water Clearance](#).
11. **Q:** Can I use an existing well on my property for an approved water source?
A: Only if you can provide the well driller's report documenting the well has a 50-foot sanitary seal.
12. **Q:** How long does it take to obtain water clearance from the Department?
A: Once the complete packet has been submitted, it generally takes no more than one week to review, conduct a site visit and provide conditions for the water system.
13. **Q:** Where can I get a copy of a list of private laboratories?
A: See the [Private Laboratory List](#) on our website, or on the [SCVWD](#) website.
14. **Q:** What is the fee for water clearance?
A: See the [CPD fee schedule](#) for individual/shared well/state small water system clearances on our website.

WELL DRILLER'S LOG – FAQ

15. **Q:** Why do I need a well driller's log?
A: This log is proof that a minimum 50-foot sanitary seal was installed around the well. This sanitary seal serves to protect the underground water sources from surface contamination.
16. **Q:** I have an existing well but no well driller's log. Who can I contact to get the log?
A: The Department has well log records dating back to 1989. If your well was drilled during this period, complete a Public Records Request form, available on our website. The SCVWD has well log records dating back to the early 1970's. Call them at (408) 265-2607 x2312 if you believe your well was drilled during that time. They will need the APN number in order to locate the well log. The State Department of Water Resources has well log records that date back to the early 1900's. Call them at (916) 227-7632 if neither the Department nor the SCVWD have the information you need. The State Department of Water Resources will need the Township/Range and Section number of the parcel in order to locate the well log. These numbers can sometimes be found on the property deed.
17. **Q:** What are my options if these agencies cannot find my well log?
A: You have two options. One option is to drill a new well. The other option is to hire a professional to do a gamma log reading on the existing well.
18. **Q:** What is a gamma log reading and where can I find someone to perform this test?
A: A gamma log reading simply measures the depth of the sanitary seal from inside the well casing. Due to certain characteristics of the concrete in the sanitary seal, the gamma log equipment measures tiny differences between the concrete and the interior of the well. Contact a well driller for more information. The well driller must first remove the well head plate and pump in order for the gamma log equipment to fit inside the well. Unfortunately, this test can be costly and there are no guarantees that this test will determine whether there is 50-foot sanitary seal in the well.

WATER STORAGE TANK REQUIREMENTS – FAQ

- 19 **Q:** What are the minimum requirements for the size of my water storage tank?
A: If the flow test results come back at 10 gallons per minute or less then the Department requires a minimum storage capacity of 1,000 gallon in addition to the fire department requirement

20. **Q:** What are the fire department's minimum requirements for a water storage tank?
A: The size of the tank, which can be used to store water for both domestic and fire protection use, is based on the square footage of the house. For more details, call the Fire Marshall's office at (408) 299-5763.

SPRINGS AS A DOMESTIC WATER SOURCE – FAQ

21. **Q:** I have had little success in finding water on my property. Can I use a spring as my source of water?
A: Only if the spring is properly developed. See the [Spring Water Clearance](#).

FINAL OCCUPANCY SIGNOFF – FAQ

23. **Q:** How do I get final occupancy signoff?
A: Check your water clearance conditional letter and make sure that everything has been completed on the list. After all the conditions have been met then call the Department for an appointment with the Water Program Senior at (408) 918-3400.

WELL SETBACKS – FAQ

24. **Q:** What are the setbacks to a well?
A: The primary setbacks considered for a well are the following:

Sewer mains/laterals	50-ft.
Subsurface sewage leaching field	100-ft.
Septic tank or pit privy	100-ft.
Animal or fowl enclosure	100-ft.
Detention/Retention ponds	100-ft.
Chemical/Fuel storage	100-ft.
Cesspool or seepage pit	150-ft.

WATER TESTING – FAQ

25. **Q:** What is the best test to ensure the potability of my well water?
A: A bacteriological test is best to determine that information. This test will determine if coliform bacteria are present or absent in your drinking water. Coliform bacteria are simple indicator organisms that reflect possible contamination of the well water. If you are in an agricultural area, it is advisable to test for excessively high nitrate concentrations. For more information on nitrates, visit the [SCVWD](#) website.

26. **Q:** How do I interpret the laboratory test result?
A: See the [Guide to Water Quality Reports](#) on our website.
27. **Q:** What if my water sample comes back positive for total coliform/E. coli?
A: Double check the sampling procedures used to collect the sample. If you sampled the system incorrectly then retest by obtaining another sample. See our [Disinfection of Contaminated Drinking Water System](#) information on our website for more details and our [Chlorine Suppliers List](#) on our website. Lastly, check out our [Troubleshooting a Contaminated Water System](#) on our website.
28. **Q:** How often should I test the potability of my private water system?
A: Testing should be done annually at a minimum. The recommendation would be biannually. If testing is done annually, the best time of year to test the water would be during the rainy season when the water table fluctuates.

DISINFECTION OF A CONTAMINATED DRINKING WATER SYSTEM – FAQ

29. **Q:** What if my water sample for a bacteriological test came back positive?
A: Double check the sampling procedures used to collect the sample. If you sampled the system incorrectly then retest by obtaining another sample. See our [Disinfection of a Contaminated Drinking Water System](#) information on our website for more details and our [Chlorine Suppliers List](#) on our website. Lastly, see [Troubleshooting a Contaminated Water System](#) on our website.