

Having a Well Drilled

What You Need to Know

A safe water supply at your home is obviously vital. Homes not served by public water systems most commonly receive their water from private water wells.

A water well is not overly expensive, especially considering how devalued a home is on resale if it doesn't have a viable water supply. This is why hiring a qualified water well contractor is extremely important. Following are some questions you should ask and facts you should know before hiring a contractor.

Establish Your Water Needs

You will need to estimate your water needs. Remember to take into account not only everyday use but also seasonal usage, such as watering lawns and washing cars, along with emergencies such as fire protection.

Most homes need a well that can produce 7 gallons of water per minute. If this quantity can't be met, you may need to install an alternate storage system. Storage systems should hold at least one day's supply of water for everyone in the household.

Determine the Water Availability

While water needs can be easily calculated, determining actual water availability can be less certain. Review existing records of nearby wells and ground water studies on file with local and state water departments and natural resource departments to determine if a water well is a viable option. These reports include information on depths, types of rocks, water levels, and expected well yields.

Drill First, Build Later

In certain areas of the country, low-yielding or even dry wells are not uncommon. With this in mind, it is smart to drill the well before building the house. An expensive home with a poor water supply is not a good investment.

Shop for a Contractor

Just like you're careful in selecting the best builder for your home, take your time selecting who will drill your water well.

It is a good idea to obtain information and price quotes from several contractors so comparisons can be made. Don't always go with the bargain price. The lowest price often ends up leading to low-quality work.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Here are some things you should know about every contractor you consider:

- Is the contractor registered or certified?
- Does he have the proper equipment to do the job and is that equipment in good condition?
- Does the contractor have insurance that will protect you?
- Will he give you a contract detailing the exact terms and conditions of the job?
- What is the contractor's reputation? Ask for multiple references; then check them to see if they are indeed satisfied customers.

Get the Details

When you select a contractor, make sure several conditions are covered in the contract: Ask that all charges be itemized and that any guarantees on workmanship be put in writing. Also make sure these details are spelled out:

- The diameter of the hole
- Size and type of casing
- Type of well screen that will be used
- The amount of time the well will be test pumped
- When a well log will be furnished.

Trust the Contractor

Unexpected events happen from time to time drilling wells. If you have taken your time and chosen wisely, the contractor is a quality professional. Trust his judgment when surprises occur. If changes have to be made, rely on the contractor's recommendations.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on your private water well, contact your local contractor. Also, visit the Web site of the National Ground Water Association, www.ngwa.org, and its site just for well owners, www.wellowner.org.



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