A well that is properly located, constructed, maintained, and tested can provide a reliable and safe drinking water source and serve many domestic, agricultural, and commercial purposes.

You and your licensed well contractor have important roles in keeping your well safe. A safe well helps keep your household healthy and protects Minnesota’s groundwater. Remember your role by remembering TIPS.

Test your water.

Inspect your well.

Protect your well.

Seal unused wells.

Keep all well records related to well construction, maintenance, repairs, disinfection, sediment removal, and testing.

1.2 million Minnesotans get their drinking water from a private well.
Your Licensed Well Contractor’s Responsibilities
When Constructing Your New Well*

Ensures proper well location.
- Correct distance from contamination sources (see image below).
- Good drainage away from the well.
- Highest practical site on the property.

Complies with MDH regulations by using approved methods, products, and materials.

Disinfects your well to get rid of harmful bacteria.

Collects an initial water sample after construction is finished to test for coliform bacteria, nitrate, and arsenic before you start using your well water for drinking or cooking.

Gives you a copy of the water test results and the Well and Boring Construction Record.

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Your Responsibilities

Test your water.
You are responsible for regularly testing your well water. Both natural sources and human activities can contaminate wells and cause short- or long-term health effects. You cannot taste, see, or smell most contaminants. MDH recommends using an accredited laboratory to test your water. Contact an accredited laboratory to get sample containers and instructions, or ask your county environmental or public health services if they provide well water testing services.

Inspect your well regularly.
- Damage: Any cracks or holes in well casing, corrosion, loose wires, or soil settling?
- Well cap: Is it securely attached to the well casing? Is it broken or missing?
- Connections: Are the electrical conduit and other connections watertight?

Protect your well.
Do these things:
- Keep top of well at least 1-foot above ground.
- Keep well area clear of debris.
- Maintain minimum isolation distances from contamination sources (see image to left).
- Mark your well with flags or posts to protect it from being hit by vehicles or machinery.
- Take precautions before and after floods.

Do NOT do these things:
- Allow water to pond around your well.
- Use, store, or dispose of potential pollutants (such as animal wastes, fertilizers, pesticides, or hazardous chemicals) near your well.
- Tie animals to your well.
- Dispose of waste in unused wells.

Seal unused wells.
A well that you no longer use (unused well) can be a pathway for contaminants to get into groundwater and is a safety hazard. You are responsible for getting unused wells on your property sealed. Only a licensed well contractor can legally seal wells.

Contact a licensed well contractor if your well needs to be repaired or sealed.

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Distances in image not to scale.
Distances may be reduced if approved protective measures are in place.

Image above: Partial list of minimum isolation distances.
Isolation distances keep pollutants away from your well to protect your water. Some sensitive wells will require greater isolation distances. For a complete list of isolation distances, see Isolation Distances from a Water-Supply Well (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/construction/isolate.html).

*Minnesota rules allow you to construct your own well if it serves your personal residence, your farm, or other agricultural purposes and is on property you own or lease. Construction and paperwork must be in accordance with Minnesota regulations. Contact MDH before you begin construction.