

Water Service Lines: Plumbing Plan Review and Contractor Qualification Overview

Licensed well contractors are in the business of installing water service lines when they construct new and replacement wells. Both the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) have authority over water service lines.

Summary

- Licensed well contractors are in the business of designing and installing water service lines, also referred to as the “building supply.”
- Plans for plumbing systems that serve the public, including water service lines, must be submitted to and approved by DLI for compliance with the Minnesota Plumbing Code. DLI also requires an inspection.
- Under Minnesota law, DLI may only accept water service line plans designed by a licensed Master plumber or engineer. DLI cannot accept plans for water service lines designed by licensed well contractors, even though licensed well contractors are allowed to do the installation work for these lines.
- MDH has authority to require and review plans for systems of water supply for public use.
- Minnesota law requires that plans for water service lines for public water systems must be submitted to and reviewed by both DLI and MDH.

Authority for water service lines

DLI Authority

The Minnesota Plumbing Code is codified in Minnesota Rules, chapter 4714. A water service line is also known as the “building supply,” and is defined at Minnesota Rules, part 4714.0204 as “the pipe carrying potable water from the municipal water supply or source of water supply to a building water meter, pressure tank, or other point of use or distribution on the lot.”

The term “building supply” is included in the definition of a plumbing system at Minnesota Rules, part 4714.0218. The Minnesota Plumbing Code includes material and installation requirements for building supplies, primarily in Minnesota Plumbing Code Chapter 6 Water Supply and Distribution.¹

¹ The Minnesota Plumbing Code is comprised of the Uniform Plumbing Code, incorporated by reference at Minnesota Rules, part 4714.0050, and Minnesota-specific amendments codified in Minnesota Rules, chapter 4714.

DLI has authority to review plans of plumbing systems in the Building Code for any plumbing system that serves the public or any considerable number of persons, or that affects the public health in any manner, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 326B.43 and Minnesota Rules, part 1300.0215. Under Minnesota Rules, part 1300.0215, DLI also has authority to inspect new plumbing systems or existing plumbing systems that have been altered, extended, or repaired, and plumbing systems may not be covered until they have been inspected.

MDH Authority

MDH has authority to require and review plans for systems of water supply for public use under Minnesota Statutes, section 144.383 and Minnesota Rules, part 4720.0010. This authority includes the review of water service lines based on the definition of “public water system” in the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (40 CFR Section 141.2).

MDH also regulates the construction of wells. The Minnesota Well Code (Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103I and Minnesota Rules, chapter 4725) includes construction and material requirements for water service lines (Minnesota Rules, parts 4725.5150 and 4725.5250).

Licensed well contractors

Contractor Qualifications

Well contractors are licensed by MDH in accordance with Minnesota Well Code requirements.

Minnesota Statutes, section 326B.46 provides the licensing requirements for plumbers, and a plumber’s license is required to work on plumbing systems. There is an exception for individuals performing water service installation who have completed pipe laying training (Minnesota Statutes, section 326B.46, subdivision 1). There is also an exception for licensed well contractors that are engaged in the work of installing a water service pipe from a well to a pressure tank (Minnesota Statutes, section 326B.46, subdivision 6).

Minnesota Statutes, section 326.03 requires licensure as an architect, engineer, land surveyor, landscape architect, geoscientist, or interior designer to prepare plans and specifications in their respective fields. Minnesota Statutes, section 326.02 provides that this licensure requirement does not apply to plans for construction and installation work by a master plumber if the work is in the scope of their plumbing license. Other exceptions in Minnesota statutes and rules allow, for example, licensed subsurface treatment system (SSTS) contractors to design SSTSs.² There is no exception in existing law to allow licensed well contractors to prepare and submit plans for water service lines to DLI.

² The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is responsible for subsurface treatment systems and licensing.

Co-authority for water service line plan review

The authorities in Minnesota Rules for plan review of water service lines are similar for MDH and DLI. However, while DLI reviews plans for any plumbing system that serves the public, MDH only reviews plans for facilities that meet the definition of a “public water system.”

Given the existing requirements under Minnesota law, both agencies must review plans for water service lines for public water systems. DLI also requires inspection of the water service line before it is covered. DLI and MDH work together, when possible, to reduce overlap and redundancies, within the scope of legal requirements.

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