

## Take Care of Your Well

There are approximately 400,000 private wells in Connecticut that serve approximately 15% of the state's population. This includes everyone in Durham except for the 108 or so customers of the Durham Water Company. Private (domestic) wells are not currently regulated by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) therefore private well owners are responsible for the quality of their own drinking water. Local Health Departments provide assistance with private wells issues in their respective towns. Private wells in Durham are properly sited and approved by our sanitarian before being constructed however, it is the responsibility of the homeowner to monitor the quality of their drinking water. Recent stories about the Tuttle Road and Gaslight Village areas serve as an opportune time for me to remind you that it is recommended that you test your wells at least once a year. Many of us haven't done so since we moved into our homes, including myself! So, before I wrote this article, I went up to the Health Department and obtained sample bottles, sampled my well water and sent the samples to the lab. Today I received my results and happily all is well (pun intended!).

Why test? There are a number of reasons why the quality of your well water can change both externally and internally, meaning that the water can be contaminated at the source or via the distribution system. Through testing you can ensure that your private drinking water is safe from harmful impurities. Also, the testing can determine what other nuisance impurities, like iron or manganese, may be present. Regular testing can also establish a record of water quality that may help solve future problems.

How to test? Our Health Department can assist you. Call Sanitarian and Assistant Health Director Bill Milardo at 860 349-8253. He will give you advice about what to test for, the locations and phone numbers of laboratories that are available to the public and may have some sampling kits made available by a nearby lab. There will be a cost associated with the test depending which tests you choose and the results are generally available in a week or less.

What to do with the results? Although it is not required, we ask that you share the results with our Health Department so that we may be alerted to problems that may go beyond the borders of your own property. The presence of a contaminant is not always an indication of a health hazard or a serious nuisance, it is the *level* at which it is found that is most important. Another reason to share your results with our sanitarian is that he can give advice for further action if needed. Depending on the level of contamination he may recommend installation of a new well, a connection to a public water supply if available, the use of bottled water or the installation of a treatment system. Sometimes the solution is as easy as a one-time sanitization (introduction of a bleach solution) of the well.

You can protect your private well by paying careful attention to what you do in and around your home and well, including the plumbing or distribution system. Regular testing and adopting best practices to prevent contamination can help ensure that your well supplies you and your family with quality water. Please visit our Health Department's page on our website [www.townofdurhamct.org](http://www.townofdurhamct.org); there are links to a number of resources to help guide you to proper maintenance and use of your well. So, put regular testing of your well on your to-do list just like changing the batteries in your smoke alarms and cleaning your furnace.