wellcare® Hotline: 888-395-1033 Fall 2020

Dear Well Owners Network Member:

It's almost Fall! Which not only means pumpkins, fall foliage, and pumpkin spice everything...but it also means that you need to start preparing your well for the coming cold winter months! After all, you can't have a pumpkin spice latte if your well isn't working! Within this newsletter you will find plenty of helpful tips for winterizing your well and interesting groundwater news!

If you have questions regarding these topics, if you cannot find what you're looking for, or if you have any other questions on wells and well water, the wellcare® Hotline can help! Contact the wellcare® Hotline at 888.395.1033 or wellcarehotline.org.

Don't forget to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter for extra tips, industry news, and more!

Every Drop Counts!

It is never easy to report, but many areas are facing serious water shortages because water is being used faster than it can be replenished naturally. You may be thinking, "It's not summer anymore" or "I have a newer home with efficient water appliances I should not have to worry." Not the case! It's still hot and dry and your well needs time to recover, and precipitation. Wells need rain and snow!

New homes typically have more efficient fixtures and use less water, but they usually have more fixtures - bathrooms, garbage disposal, whirlpool tub, hot tub, or swimming pool - that consume greater quantities of water. All well owners with all styles of homes should take steps to cut water use, safeguard their drinking water supply, save money, and protect the environment. Trust us, you do not want to wait until a prolonged drought or water shortage creates a water emergency like a dry well!

Small changes in behavior can also reap big benefits in saving water and money by reducing wear and tear on your well and septic system. Just think about the hundreds of gallons of water you are pumping from your well each day to your home then that water is released from your home which goes to your septic system. These heavy uses will eventually cause expensive repair or replacement and exhaust groundwater resources.

Limit demand by spreading out your daily and weekly water-uses, such as bathing, watering the garden, and washing dishes or clothes. Remember, even seemingly small measures can save thousands of gallons of water per year. Read more tips to #savewater and protect our environment!

SepticSmart Week 2020

Thinking about your septic system after reading the first article? Us too! If you have a well it is likely you have a septic system. Just like your well, these highly efficient, self-contained, underground wastewater treatment systems must be properly maintained to keep your well water, family, and the environment safe.

#SepticSmartWeek is a great reminder! Visit the SepticSmart website and download our information sheets, Your Septic System for Homeowners and Septic Systems for Environmental Health Specialists.

Hotline HOT Topic: Sediment & Well Water

Our wellcare® Hotline started receiving an increase in calls related to dirty water, sediment in water, low flow, and air in the water lines. All can indicate a well going dry or at the very least, that something is wrong with your well. If you are having any of these problems, please call your licensed well contractor as soon as possible. Many well contractors are booked out for weeks if not months and it is best to get on their schedule. *Know that these conditions can also be related to other causes like the pump and tank or a water quality change, and not just that your well is running dry.*

To find a licensed well contractor in your area our interactive map and download our information sheets related to this topic:

Coping with Low Water Levels
Sediment & Well Water
What to Do If the Well Runs Dry

If you have any questions or concerns about your well or still need help finding a licensed well contractor contact the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033, send us a chat or email.

Update on PFAS (PFOA and PFOS)

Some States Have Recently Implemented New or Updated Standards for PFAS

Colorado has established a non-regulatory lifetime health advisory concentration of 70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS (individually and combined).

Michigan also had established that PFOA and PFOS combined were not to exceed 70 parts per trillion. However, Michigan recently implemented stricter maximum contaminant limits (MCLs) for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water to 16 and 8 parts per trillion, and, for the first time, assigned limits to five other PFAS compounds.

New York also implemented stricter maximum levels; 10 parts per trillion each for Perfluorooctanoic acid ("PFOA") and perfluorooctane sulfonate ("PFOS") (collectively "PFAS") and 1 part per billion for 1,4-Dioxane. The maximum levels for PFAS in New York's drinking water are among the lowest in the United States!

What you need to know...

PFAS WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ARE PFAS CHEMICALS?

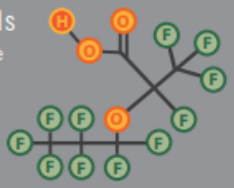
Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS and GenX chemicals. Since the 1940s, PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States. PFOA and PFOS have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals. Both are very persistent in the environment and in the human body. Exposure to certain PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

PFOA & PFOS

U.S. manufacturers voluntarily phased out PFOA and PFOS, two specific PFAS chemicals.

GenX Chemicals

GenX chemicals are a replacement for PFOA.



WHAT EPA IS DOING

Some of the agency's work includes: development of additional toxicity values, analytical methods for additional PFAS and non-drinking water media as well as treatment options for PFAS in drinking water. EPA is also hosting a National Leadership Summit on PFAS in May 2018.

Established methods to measure 14 PFAS compounds in drinking water

Identified five treatment processes for PFOA and PFOS

Identified all PFAS chemicals that are legally available for production and use

Provided national monitoring data for 6 PFAS in drinking water

Issued drinking water health advisories (70 parts per trillion) for PFOA and PFOS in 2016

Provided support for 10 states with site-specific PFAS challenges and problems: NC (Cape Fear River), MI, DE, WV, CO, NY (Hoosick Falls), OH, NH, VT and NJ

Updated website to include tools and information so that states, tribes and local communities can understand, assess and address PFAS incidents and emergencies

HOW ARE WE EXPOSED TO PFAS?

PFAS include a large number of important chemicals that can be used in some food packaging and can make things grease- and stain-resistant. They are also used in firefighting foams and in a wide range of manufacturing practices. Unfortunately, some of these substances don't break down over time. That means they build up in the environment and in our bodies.

Drinking water can be a source of exposure in communities where these chemicals have contaminated water supplies. Such contamination is typically localized and associated with a specific facility, for example,

- an industrial facility where PFAS were produced or used to manufacture other products, or
- locations where firefighting foam was used such as oil refineries, airfields or other training facilities for firefighters

If you are concerned about the possibility of PFAS in your drinking water, contact your local water supplier and ask for more information about PFAS.

STAIN/GREASE REPELLENT | FIREFIGHTING FOAMS | INDUSTRIAL USES

HEALTH EFFECTS

There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse health outcomes in humans. If humans or animals ingest PFAS (by eating or drinking food or water than contain PFAS), the PFAS are absorbed and can accumulate in the body. PFAS stay in the human body for long periods of time. In some cases, the level of PFAS in the body can increase to the point where people can suffer from adverse health effects.

Studies indicate that high concentrations of PFOA and PFOS can cause reproductive and developmental, liver and kidney, and immunological effects in laboratory animals. Both chemicals have caused tumors in animal studies. The most consistent findings from human studies are increased cholesterol levels among exposed populations, with more limited findings related to:

- infant birth weights
- adverse effects on the immune system
- cancer (for PFOA)
- thyroid hormone effects (for PFOS)

WWW.EPA.GOV/PFAS SOURCE: U.S.EPA

If you are concerned if PFAS have been detected near you, view this interactive map.

So, you may be wondering, "What does this mean for me?" These chemicals are not detectable through taste, smell, or visual inspection. This means you will have to test your water to know if they are present. SimpleWater provides testing services including testing for PFAS. SimpleWater was founded at the University of California in Berkeley and developed mytapscore.com to provide useful, efficient, and affordable water testing services. PFOA and PFOS testing can be found on their website.

For more information download our information sheet on PFOA and PFOS & Well Water or contact the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033 with any questions.

Time to Winterize and Protect Those Pipes!

Let's be honest, you may have read this article several times already, but it is important for our new members to see it as well.

If you are closing your home for the winter and are unable to reach a professional to help, read our instructions for Winterizing.

Every year we hear from homeowners with a frozen well or plumbing system. If your well or pipes freeze, contact your licensed well contractor or plumber as soon as possible.

If you are in an area that tends to reach freezing temperatures, you should make every effort to prevent your pipes and well casing from freezing. When pipes freeze, the flow of water is completely blocked. Since water expands as it turns into ice, the pipes are highly likely to burst. It could also ruin your well pump. This can be an expensive problem to fix and a disastrous occurrence in frigid winter months. Both hot and cold water pipelines can freeze, so be sure to protect both.

Even if you are not in an area that freezes often, it is recommended to have supplies on hand just in case it happens. Remember, even the south can freeze!

Your Pump and Well

Most well pumps are down inside the well at depths that do not freeze, so you will be protecting the well casing that is exposed (above ground) and your pipes. You can insulate your well casing and pipes with foam rubber sleeves or fiberglass insulation, wrapping the insulating material around the casing and pipes. For extra protection in the areas of your home that are not heated, such as a crawl space or basement area, pipes may first be wrapped with special heating strips and then an outer layer of insulation wrapped on top. For assistance, contact a licensed well contractor or plumber in your area.

If you have an above ground pump, it needs to be kept in an area where the temperature stays above 40 degrees in order to prevent the water in the pump and water lines from freezing. If the pump is located in an area where temperatures drop below 32 degrees, the pump should be housed in an insulated enclosure. The pump motor does generate some heat which can help prevent the pump from freezing inside an enclosure. If your pump is exposed outside and your area experiences some days of freezing temperatures, contact your licensed well contractor to help with enclosing your pump to prevent it from freezing.

Help keep your well from freezing with a pitless adapter. A pitless adapter attaches to your well casing to provide a sanitary and frost proof seal between the casing and the water line running to your home. This device protects the water from freezing and permits convenient access to the well and well components without having to dig around the well. The adapter is connected to the well casing below the frost line, which is the depth at which the ground does not freeze. Water from the well is diverted horizontally at the adapter to prevent it from freezing. Contact your licensed well contractor to discuss installing a pitless adapter.

Your Pipes

If your home has an outside faucet or spigot, there may be a shutoff valve somewhere inside of your home. Turn off the water supply to this faucet for the duration of the winter. First, close the shutoff valve then open the outside faucet to drain the remaining water from the pipe. This will protect the pipes that lead to the outdoors from freezing. If you do not have a shutoff valve, consider having one installed.

Try to spot any trouble with your pipes before it's too late, keeping an eye out for signs that may indicate your pipes are beginning to freeze. For instance, has your water pressure dropped? Note: If you notice this problem prior to cold months, this is not a sign of pipes freezing. Contact your licensed well contractor for assistance.

If there is a cold spell and you fear your pipes are going to freeze despite the efforts you have made, there is still one more trick. Leave one of your

faucets that is farthest from your home's water supply open and running slightly. If the water is running, it will be less likely to freeze.

For more information on protecting your well, contact your licensed well contractor, plumber, or the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033.

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wellcare® Program Survey for Private Water Well Users

We are conducting a survey to identify factors that influence motivations and barriers to well stewardship among private well users across the U.S. Please take a minute and be a part of this important survey. It should take less than 5 minutes to complete. No personal information is requested. We appreciate your participation!

Start Survey...

Still Have Questions?

We can help! Call the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033, **complete an online form**, **send us an email**, or **chat with us live!**

STAY CONNECTED:

Water Systems Council, 1101 30th Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20007