

Article 4 of 5 in a series of interesting and informative articles from Alberta's Working Well program providing well owners with the knowledge and tools they need to care for their water wells.



Water for a Lifetime

Proper Well Maintenance and Cleaning Extends the Lifetime of a Water Well

Almost every motor vehicle owner knows that regular maintenance of their vehicle is vital to protect their investment and keep their vehicle running properly. Common sense says that if they don't invest in regular oil changes and tune-ups, they will have to pay much more later on in engine repairs. The same logic holds true when it comes to water well maintenance.

"Neglecting to maintain a well can be costly in the long run for a landowner," says Chris Gerritsen, current president of the Alberta Water Well Drilling Association and an advocate for the Working Well program. "You can't assume that a well is working properly just because water is coming out of the tap. With proper maintenance, the life of a well can be substantially increased. Total neglect on the other hand, can cost the landowner the well."

With more than 39 years working as a licensed well driller in Alberta, Gerritsen has seen a lot of changes in the industry. "There are better ways to do things today and modern wells are safer than ever before," he says. "But maintenance remains important – regardless of the age of the well. Even though most people today are aware of the importance of maintaining their well, some still aren't doing it."

Under the Water Act, private well owners have a responsibility to protect their water wells and keep ground water resources healthy and clean for future generations. "Well owners need to understand that it is their responsibility to manage their well water properly," says Jennifer Macpherson with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and the Working Well Program. "If a well isn't regularly maintained, it can get plugged up with minerals or become contaminated with bacteria. If you regularly measure and record water level readings, over time you'll be able to see if the well's productivity starts to decline and can have a licensed driller assess and repair the problem before it is too late. If it goes too far, it may become too costly or even impossible to rehabilitate."

Most maintenance procedures can be performed by well owners at little or no cost, but some procedures require the assistance of a professional driller. Whether it is taking water samples, measuring water levels, landscaping to manage runoff issues or shock chlorinating a well, the old saying holds true – "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

The other truth is that the consequences of neglect will always catch up with you. Like the vehicle owner who doesn't take the time to check oil in the engine of his car, a private well owner who doesn't perform regular maintenance on his well may find that one day it simply doesn't work anymore.

Learning the Basics of Well Maintenance

There is a lot to know about protecting and maintaining a water well. Well owners can learn how to perform basic maintenance procedures and speak to professionals about specific concerns with their own wells at one of several free workshops offered throughout the province by the Working Well program. For more information on workshop dates or to access free online resources, visit the Working Well website at: www.workingwell.alberta.ca