



Drought Guidance for Homeowners on Residential Wells

Approximately 40% of New Hampshire's residents rely on their own wells for water supply. During previous droughts, residential wells have experienced impacts, including water quality issues, unreliable supplies and total well failure. Below, you'll find information and resources relating to minimizing well impacts during drought, identifying symptoms of a well supply shortage, remedying well supply issues and seeking alternative sources of supply.

Current drought conditions, drought guidance and drought resource information is available on the [NHDES Drought Management Program webpage](#).

Identifying and Addressing Drought Impacts

Typically, certain types of wells are more prone to water supply problems when drought conditions are present. These wells include dug wells, shallow bedrock wells, wells located near topographic high points and wells constructed in areas where bedrock is close to the ground surface. Most homeowners do not have a means of determining a well's water level, although symptoms of a shortage in water supply can be obvious. Symptoms may include:

- No water.
- Sudden drops in water pressure or pressure surges.
- Air bubbles coming out of non-aerated faucets.
- Cloudy or heavily silted water.

The cause of these symptoms may be a shortage of water or other problems associated with the well casing, valves, waterlines, pumps or pressure tanks. It is important to work with a licensed pump installer and/or well driller to diagnose the problem and determine the appropriate corrective action to take. Also, it is advisable to take action early, because the demand for well drillers and pump installers during drought increases, as do wait times.

To address a water supply shortage or a total well failure, see the NHDES fact sheet, [DW-DWGB-1-16 Water Supply Options for Homeowners on Residential Wells During Drought](#). The fact sheet provides guidance on the following:

- Where to find information about the type and depth of your well.
- Contact information for a certified water well contractor or pump installer.
- Well improvement options.
- Financing a well improvement project.
- Alternative water supplies.
- Safety and sanitation.

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Avoiding a Well Water Supply Shortage

Abide by water restrictions. Pursuant to [RSA 41:11-d](#), municipalities, including village districts, have the authority to restrict lawn watering during a drought. The restriction can apply to homeowners and businesses relying on their own wells, as well as customers purchasing water from a public water system. The purpose of these types of restrictions is to ensure the community's essential and critical needs are met, as well as to prevent residents relying on their own wells from experiencing water shortages at the expense of another's non-essential use.

Not all municipalities choose to restrict lawn watering during drought. This does not mean that supplies are sufficient enough to meet your needs. Track drought conditions and recommendations on the [NHDES Drought Management Program webpage](#) and take action early to prevent supply shortages.

Below are recommendations to help reduce stress on your water supply:

- Spread out the timing of water use so that multiple water uses do not co-occur and so the well has time to replenish between uses.
- Cut-out non-essential uses such as outdoor water use for lawn watering, car washing and pressure washing. This can reduce water use by 25% to 50%.
- Conserve water by cutting back on shower times, only doing full loads of laundry when necessary, and turning off the faucet while brushing teeth, doing dishes and washing hands.
- Replace old water fixtures and appliances that are wasting water. Top-loading washing machines built before 2003 and toilets older than 1994 are known to be the largest water-wasting culprits in the home. Showerheads older than 1994 can also waste a great deal of water, as can older bathroom sink aerators. Selecting ENERGY STAR® certified machines and replacing old water fixtures with EPA WaterSense certified fixtures is an easy way to ensure you are choosing products that will save water and perform. For guidance on selecting ENERGY STAR® and WaterSense certified products and more water efficiency tips, see the [NHDES water efficiency fact sheets](#).
- Fix leaks, including running toilets. Running toilets can waste hundreds of gallons a day. Old and worn toilet flappers are often the culprit and are very easy to replace. Also, some toilet leaks can't be heard. Check for a leak by dropping food coloring (12 drops) or a leak detector dye tablet in the toilet tank. Do not flush for 15 or 20 minutes. If the dye shows up in the bowl, you know that your toilet is running.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information, please contact the NHDES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov or visit www.des.nh.gov.

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