



What is required in Snohomish County?

Currently, there are no state or local well inspection requirements for real estate transactions that involve a property with an existing well. However, lenders may require a well inspection or water quality sampling as part of the homebuying process.

What is recommended?

It is a good idea to learn as much as you can about the well so you can make an informed decision and be aware of any issues that exist before you buy. You can learn about a well through:



Well inspections

If you have a well inspection done, be sure to ask questions about everything covered by the company’s inspection fee. In general, it should include things like checking the well and any well system parts for malfunction or damage, testing the well to see if it produces enough water, and water quality sampling (see below). Note: Snohomish County Health Department does not offer well inspection services on existing wells.

Water quality sampling

Testing for contaminants can help ensure the well water is safe to drink. At a minimum, water samples for existing wells should be tested for coliform bacteria, nitrate, and arsenic. These should be at or below the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) listed here.

Contaminant	MCL
Coliform bacteria	Zero present
Nitrate	10.0 mg/L
Arsenic	0.010 mg/L

These three contaminants are recommended as part of routine well testing by Washington State Department of Health and Department of Ecology. They are more common to wells, can have significant health effects, and are difficult or impossible to detect based on smell, taste, or appearance. There may be other contaminants you wish to test for or that your lender will require as well. Some homes may have a filtration system to remove or reduce levels of contaminants such as arsenic, so water sampling results can help verify if the filtration system is operating properly.

Existing records

A “well log” is a record with important info about how a well was constructed. Search for well logs online with Department of Ecology’s Well Report Viewer (<https://apps.wr.ecology.wa.gov/wellconstruction/map/WCLWebMap/default.aspx>) or call their help desk at 206-594-0193.



DOE Well Report Viewer

Snohomish County Health Department also has records for existing wells from when they were reviewed as a source of drinking water. Contact us by phone or email to request records we may have on file for a particular well.

Does the seller need to disclose issues with the well?

In Washington state, real estate transactions require the seller to complete a seller's disclosure (unless the buyer has waived the right to receive it or the real estate transfer is exempt from this requirement). When reviewing the seller's disclosure, be sure to note any info disclosed about the well and water system, including things that may impact water quality or use of the well such as groundwater contamination and water rights.

What if the well is new?

When a new well is constructed, it goes through Health Department & Department of Ecology requirements before it can be accepted as a source of drinking water. After initial approval though, there are many things that can impact the quality and function of a well over time which is why the suggestions on page one are for existing wells.

What if the well won't be used or is no longer active?

Abandoned wells are required to be decommissioned, as they can lead to contaminated groundwater and pose a safety risk to children, adults, and animals. If the property you are looking to buy has an abandoned well (or you plan to connect to a public water supply and abandon the well yourself), keep in mind it will need to be properly decommissioned. More info on well decommissioning can be found under the Abandoned Wells tab of our well maintenance webpage (<https://www.snohd.org/710/Maintaining-Your-Well>).

If you decide to buy

Collect as much info about the well and associated components as you can such as repairs it still needs, parts manuals, and other helpful resources. This will help you understand how to maintain your well and the costs of upkeep. Visit our website for info on well maintenance and ways keep your household healthy and protect groundwater in your community (<https://www.snohd.org/710/Maintaining-Your-Well>).



Maintaining
Your Well

Learn more

Testing Your Water | Washington State Department of Health
<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/contaminants/testing-your-water>

Arsenic and Your Private Well | Washington State Department of Health
<https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/healthy-home/home-contaminants/arsenic/arsenic-and-your-private-well>

Private Wells: Information for Owners | Department of Ecology
<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/0611021.pdf>

RCW 64.06 Real Property Transfers - Sellers' Disclosures | Revised Code of Washington
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=64.06>

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