

Basic Tips for Keeping Drinking Water Clean and Safe








The State of Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality and Oregon Health Authority drinking water protection programs have completed source water assessments for all public water systems. These assessments include maps of the area supplying a water system's well or intake (commonly called the Drinking Water Source Area), along with information on the risks within this area. Local community members, including residents, businesses and water systems can use this assessment information to develop strategies to reduce contamination risks.

Everyday activities at homes, businesses and farms can be significant sources of pollutants to

drinking water. When we understand that drinking water comes from rainfall either seeping through the land surface to an aquifer, or running off the land surface to a nearby stream, we can take steps to help minimize the risk of contamination from activities on the land surface.

One person can make a difference. By making small changes, we can make our environment better. We can also encourage our friends, relatives, co-workers and neighbors to help prevent pollution. Some things you can do to protect drinking water in your community are listed below.

Things You Can Do to Protect Drinking Water

<p>In the Home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Properly dispose of household hazardous wastes. Take toxic chemicals like weed killers, pesticides, thinners, strippers, wood preservatives and cleaning chemicals to a hazardous waste collection center. Do not dump toxic chemicals down the drain or on the ground. For household hazardous waste information, visit http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/hhw/index.htm. Call your local garbage hauler for more information.  Properly dispose of pharmaceuticals and personal care products including out-of-date and other leftover prescription and non-prescription medications. For options, see OHA's website on Takeback Programs or DEQ's factsheet on Household Pharmaceutical Waste Disposal.  Find out if you have underground storage tanks (USTs) or above-ground storage tanks (ASTs) on your property. Residential USTs and ASTs typically are used to store heating oil. Rural properties and farms may have USTs or ASTs for gasoline, diesel, chemical and waste oil storage. Active USTs and ASTs should be checked for leakage, which can increase with tank age. DEQ strongly recommends inactive USTs be properly removed or closed in place to prevent expensive leaks that endanger public health or damage the environment. Homeowners who replace or decommission a heating oil tank may be eligible for free technical assistance and grants from DEQ. Contact DEQ's Tank Helpline at 1-800-742-7878, or visit http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/tanks/hot/homeowners.htm.  Conserve Water — Turn off the faucet when you're brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face and you will save two to three gallons of water each minute. Install low-flow faucets and fix leaky faucets right away. Clean vegetables and fruits in a pan of water — not under a running faucet. Run the dishwasher and washing machine only when fully loaded. Make every drop count!
<p>In your Garage/ Workshop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Recycle or properly dispose of used motor oil, grease and parts cleaners, and antifreeze. Solid and hazardous waste laws prohibit land spreading of waste oil for dust or weed suppression. Call your local garbage hauler for more information.  Check for leaking fluids from vehicles. Clean up drips with an absorbent-like kitty litter or sawdust and properly dispose of contaminated absorbent. Do not use water to wash spills since water percolates into the ground or discharges to storm drains in the street (which typically lead to streams and rivers).  Inventory your hazardous household products like thinners, solvents, oil-based paints, stains and finishes, photographic chemicals and art supplies. Store only what you'll use; properly dispose of waste materials; and give extras to a neighbor for their use. Use less-toxic alternatives whenever possible.



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**Alternative
formats**
Alternative formats of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ's Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5696 or call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, x5696, for more information. Hearing-impaired persons may call 711.

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Things You Can Do to Protect Drinking Water (Continued)

In the Yard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Carefully follow label directions for use and disposal of fertilizers and pesticides and use less toxic alternatives whenever possible.  Select disease- and pest-resistant plants and learn about biological controls. Call your local County Extension Service Office for free information.  Go easy on fertilizers and pesticides. Test your soil to help determine fertilizer and compost needs for your lawn and garden to avoid overfertilization.  Water wisely — Water during cooler parts of the day (late evening and early morning). Water slowly and evenly with 1 to 1½ inches of water per week so that moisture soaks down to the roots. If it doesn't grow, don't water it! Use a broom (not a hose) to clean driveways, sidewalks and other hard surfaces. Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, faucets and couplings.
For Well & Septic System Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  The Oregon Well Water Program website is an excellent resource for private well and septic system owners: Hhttp://wellwater.orst.edu/H  Never store pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals adjacent to your well to avoid direct well contamination.  Properly abandon old wells and never use them as disposal pits. For information on abandoning wells, or to order well records (logs), contact the Oregon Water Resources Department at 503-986-0900.  Ensure your well construction and surface seal is adequate to minimize the chance of chemicals wicking through the soil down the outside of the casing or entering the well directly. Find information on the OSU Extension Well Water Program website (Hhttp://wellwater.orst.edu/H).  Regularly test your well water for nitrates, bacteria and other contaminants, as necessary.  Properly maintain your septic system by having the septic tank pumped out every two to three years.  Do not put improper materials down the household drains like garbage disposal food wastes, drain cleaners, household chemicals and other toxic-cleaning agents.
In your Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Learn more about where your water supply comes from, potential sources of contamination, and local and state water protection efforts.  Organize a drinking water forum, community water festival, water testing or other educational event.  Support drinking water education in local schools.  Volunteer to help develop and implement your community's Drinking Water Protection Strategies.

Who to Call for Help

For local assistance, check the government section of your phone directory for telephone numbers.

- Water Utility or Public Works Department
- County Environmental Health Department
- Waste Disposal and Recycling Facility (check your monthly garbage bill for name and number)
- County Development or Planning Office
- County Extension Service

Contact	What
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 1-800-452-4011 or 503-229-5696 Hhttp://www.deq.state.or.us/H	Drinking water protection planning, groundwater contamination, septic tanks, underground storage tanks, toxic wastes, pollution prevention, and hazardous waste reduction, collection and disposal.
Oregon Health Authority (OHA) 971-673-0405 or 541-726-2587 Hhttp://www.healthoregon.org/dwp	Public water system water quality testing results, groundwater issues, health effects, water quality concerns, drinking water testing laboratories, groundwater susceptibility and drinking water protection.
Oregon Water Resources Department 503-986-0900 or Hhttp://www.wrd.state.or.us/H	Abandoned wells, well construction, well logs, well maintenance, water rights and water master.
Oregon State University Extension Service Oregon Well Water Program: Hhttp://wellwater.orst.edu/H	Groundwater quality assessment for rural homeowners, farmers and private well owners, groundwater friendly gardening and lawn care.
Oregon Department of Agriculture 503-986-4550 or Hhttp://oregon.gov/ODA/NRD/index.shtml	Technical assistance about agricultural practices, effect of soil type on groundwater vulnerability, pesticides, fertilizers, best management practices, permits..