

Monitoring Well Driller Licensing

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Position Paper

Subjects

Monitoring well driller licensing, groundwater protection, hazardous waste

Audience

Consultants, industry, legislators, government officials

Background

In the *Manual of Ground-Water Sampling Procedures*, Scalf et al. state: "The success of a ground-water monitoring program depends on numerous factors; however, the location, design, and construction of the monitoring wells is usually the most costly and non-repeatable factor. Hence, it is extremely important that the well construction be accomplished properly at the outset."

Production wells may be used to obtain samples in ambient groundwater monitoring programs. However, production wells should not be used for more detailed source, case preparation, and research types of monitoring, according to Barcelona et al.

The majority of respondents in a recent survey considered safety training and specialized well drilling instruction extremely important factors to consider when evaluating entry into the monitoring well business.

Issue

Should individuals installing monitoring wells be licensed to ensure that the integrity of a monitoring program is not impaired by improper monitoring well installation?

Position

The National Ground Water Association supports the administration and proper enforcement by states of a specialized licensing program for drillers supervising the installation of monitoring wells. NGWA recognizes the specific expertise needed to install monitoring wells and the fact that production well technology may not be appropriate for monitoring programs. In addition, particular care and knowledge are needed to assure that construction methods and materials do not bias sampling programs and do not exacerbate an already existing groundwater contamination situation. NGWA has instituted a special voluntary certification program for monitoring well drillers and encourages states to adopt this certification test as a part of their monitoring well driller licensing program. The use of a national test provides a method of assuring a minimum level of competence throughout the industry, a standard of protection for the resource, and a pathway to reciprocity. NGWA opposes grandfathering of individuals under monitoring well driller licensing programs.

NGWA recognizes the inherent health risks that may be present at sites where monitoring wells are installed. Proof of completion of a 40-hour safety training course meeting the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's standards should, therefore, be a requirement for initial license



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issuance. Additionally, completion of an annual eight-hour health and safety refresher course should be a condition for license renewal.

In order to maintain the level of competence as demonstrated by successful completion of the initial license test and to assure that advances in technology and science are applied in the field, NGWA endorses the concept of proof of continuing education as a prerequisite to license renewal. States are urged to scrutinize educational offerings and accept only those directly related to the monitoring well field for meeting this continuing education requirement.

NGWA believes that attendance at practical, field-oriented courses in monitoring well construction would benefit individuals wanting to enter the monitoring well market. Educational providers are encouraged to develop additional applied courses in monitoring well construction to meet this need.

NGWA recommends that state monitoring well driller licensing programs encompass all types of monitoring wells and suggests the following definition for consideration:

Monitoring well: a water well that is constructed within a soil or rock boring for the purpose of determining water levels and monitoring chemical, biological, and physical properties of groundwater.

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References

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Scalf, Marion R., James F. McNabb, William J. Dunlap, Roger L. Cosby, and John Fryberger. *Manual of Ground-Water Sampling Procedures*, 1981.

RCRA Ground Water Monitoring Technical Enforcement Guidance Document. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 1986.

Date

Originally adopted by the NGWA Board of Directors on October 28, 1989, NGWA issue briefs are updated as needed to reflect changes in information, as noted here: technical amendment made February 4 1992; brief reformatted August 2009.