

Water Well Contractor Licensing

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Position Paper

Subjects

Water well contractor licensing, groundwater use, groundwater protection

Audience

Homeowners, government officials, building contractors

Background

Forty-four percent of the U.S. population uses groundwater for their drinking water source. Approximately 97 percent of rural residents depend entirely on this resource for their domestic uses. Census figures indicate that during 2007 there were 13,249,000 occupied households served by private water wells. The federal Safe Drinking Water Act's provisions, which are intended to protect public drinking water, do not extend to private household wells.

As a means of protecting the public, 48 states have instituted statewide programs to license individuals installing wells. Although specific requirements for these programs vary from state to state, generally some combination of testing, years of experience, or some other criteria are used to measure the competence and knowledge of the contractor regarding water well construction techniques. These laws also provide the states with an enforcement tool to assure compliance with applicable construction codes.

Issue

Should states license water well contractors to help ensure that homeowners are provided with a safe drinking water supply and the groundwater resource is protected?

Position

There is nothing more basic to human survival than provision for an adequate water supply. The National Ground Water Association endorses the administration of a fair and equitable licensing program that is properly enforced in order to assure:

- Increased protection for the homeowner who uses groundwater as a drinking water source
- A public that has confidence in the contractor as a licensed professional
- The protection of the groundwater resource through adherence to proper water well construction standards
- A minimum level of competence among water well contractors.

NGWA encourages states that have no water well contractor licensing to investigate the public health and environmental benefits of instituting such a program. Further, NGWA encourages states with licensing programs to adopt the Association's Voluntary Certification Program as part of their state requirements so as to assure a minimum level of competence throughout the industry,



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a standard of protection for the resource, equitable treatment for homeowners, and a pathway to reciprocity. Currently, 17 states have incorporated these tests in their licensing procedure.

In order to maintain the level of competence, as demonstrated by the successful completion of the initial license test and to assure that advances in technology and science are applied in the field, NGWA also endorses the concept of proof of continuing education as a prerequisite to license renewal.

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Date

Originally adopted by the NGWA Board of Directors April 22, 1988, NGWA position papers are updated as needed to reflect changes in information, as noted here: technical amendments made August 7, 1991, February 4, 1992, July 14, 1997, October 13, 1998, February 5, 1999, August 3, 1999, July 19, 2005, and September 13, 2005; brief reformatted August 2009; amended February 15, 2011; technical update December 15, 2011.