

designed to safeguard both the quality of water extracted from the wells and the quality of the aquifer water, both of which could potentially be polluted by intruding wells.

## **What are the well construction requirements?**

"Well" is defined basically as any excavation to remove, locate, or artificially recharge groundwater. Under the statutes, the construction, repair or abandonment of wells must be performed only by licensed contractors. The WMDs provide testing and other licensing procedures for contractors. There are, however, a few important exceptions to the requirement that a licensed contractor do the work as long as all other local or state laws are complied with. No license is required:

- for homeowners (or renters) to construct a well 2" or less in diameter on their property so long as used only for personal or farming use.
- in situations where the WMD determines that compliance with the rules would result in unnecessary hardship for the applicant.

To qualify for the undue hardship exemption, a written request must be made to the governing WMD. Regardless of exemption qualification, the department must be notified of a well once it comes into existence.

The construction, repair or abandonment of a well will probably also require a well permit from the appropriate District. The primary exceptions to this rule are:

- Construction permits need not be obtained retroactively for wells constructed before 1972 (although permits are required to repair or abandon these wells).
- When one wants to temporarily operate equipment for dewatering.
- Where the district determines that requiring a permit would result in unnecessary hardship for the applicant.

Remember that the districts also require a consumptive use permit for many withdrawals or diversions of water regardless of applicable well permitting exemptions.

Also, imprudent pesticide use near wells may result in contamination of groundwater in the underlying aquifer, causing widespread pollution. Consequently, the farmer should be familiar with all regulations designed to prevent water contamination before taking any action involving water wells.

## **Where should a well be placed?**

All proposed well sites must be pre-approved by the appropriate district. This guards against the possibility that a well will unknowingly be drilled into an area of existing groundwater contamination. The DER provides continually updated maps of contaminated sections of the aquifer to the Districts and pertinent County Health Departments. This information is available upon request to applicants. The Districts and County Health Departments also prescribe the minimum distances from the contaminated areas in which wells may be constructed. The Districts are also responsible for advising applicants on the minimum well placement distances from septic tanks, drain fields, chemical storage areas, and other potential pollution sources.

## **What are the well standards and specifications?**

The DER also publishes basic requirements for drilling techniques and materials, grouting and sealing, identification and labeling of well heads, and other, highly specific areas. These standards must be observed even where it is not necessary to obtain a permit or license.