

Commonly Asked Questions About Well Interference Investigations

What is the first thing a homeowner should do when their well runs dry?

Homeowners should first contact a licensed well driller and have their water supply restored. Sometimes wells go out of water due to a mechanical problem which can be fixed by a well driller and is not caused by well interference. Keep all related receipts.

If the well owner suspects that the lack of water was caused by nearby high-capacity groundwater use, the well owner can file a complaint with the DNR. Examples of high-capacity groundwater users include industries, irrigators, public water supplies, or quarries.

What happens when a report or complaint is received by DNR?

All written Well Interference Complaints submitted to the DNR receive a thorough review. The DNR conducts a site investigation, reviews the history, timeline, geology and other information to determine what caused the lack of water situation. There is no fee for filing a well interference complaint nor any costs to the homeowner for the investigation. This is a public service required by Minnesota Rules, 6115.0730.

How much does it cost to repair or replace a well?

Well inspections can cost several hundred dollars, with repairs being several thousand dollars, depending on the work that needs done and parts that need replacing. In Minnesota, a new well generally cost \$6,000-\$10,000 depending on the depth, type of pump, the cost of connecting to the home and travel fees. In some cases restoring water may involve the cost of lowering the pump in the well or replacing the pump, while in other situations it may be the cost of drilling a new well or connecting to a rural water supply.

Who pays for the well repair or replacement?

Homeowners are responsible for paying the licensed well driller, electrician, or other service providers who complete work to restore their domestic water supply. If the DNR finds a well interference complaint to be valid, then the parties responsible have the option to negotiate a settlement with the homeowner. Most valid well interference complaints are resolved through a settlement process. The high-capacity water user(s) whose pumping led to the limited domestic water supply will compensate the domestic owner for the costs associated with resolving the situation. The reimbursement may be for partial or all costs associated with restoring a water supply.

If I get a new well should I seal my old well?

If you plan to submit a Well Interference Complaint form DO NOT seal your old well initially. The law changed in 2015 to say that any domestic well that is sealed prior to

DNR's technical investigation is considered invalid. After the investigation is complete, if the old well will no longer be in use, the MN Department of Health requires it to be properly sealed. The well sealing needs to wait until the DNR has completed its investigation.

[During the investigation, what are DNR investigators trying to find out?](#)

Investigators gather information from various sources in order to answer several questions, including:

- What happened?
- Did the event meet the statutory definition of a well interference?
- What is the well history and construction?
- What do nearby water-use records indicate in terms of timing and volume?
- Is nearby groundwater level data indicating a drop in water level?
- Are there unique aspects of geology or geography that impact the case?
- Is an Aquifer test or other monitoring necessary?
- If well interference occurred, which high-capacity appropriator(s) were responsible?
- Is further action necessary to reduce the chance that the well interference will reoccur?

[Will the investigators come to the complainants' property during the investigation?](#)

Yes, investigations include a visit to the site of the reported well interference. These visits are typically announced/planned in advance. The homeowner does not need to be present for outdoor wells. The investigators may need to take measurements, photos or conduct well tests. The investigators may return as often as needed to complete the investigation.

[Does the homeowner have to let the investigator onto the premises and allow them to look at the well?](#)

Yes, DNR staff will be identified as state employees. We do not subcontract for this work. Denial of access to the well may result in dismissal of the case. When investigators are on-site, they intend to cause minimal disruption to the water supply.

[Will the DNR investigators interview people?](#)

Yes, investigators will likely interview homeowners, nearby irrigators, industries or other high-capacity well owners, and sometimes nearby homeowners.

[Who will have access to the information that the investigators are collecting?](#)

During the investigation, all information is confidential, which means that it cannot be shared with anyone, except other government agencies, such as the Department of Health or law enforcement if appropriators are issued cease and desist orders.

When the investigation is completed, most of the information becomes public. The name of the individual(s) who submitted the well interference complaint is reported in the Technical Report and contact information is provided for the settlement process.

[What happens when the investigation is complete?](#)

The Groundwater Technical Unit staff will write a summary called the Well Interference Technical Report that contains key aspects of the information gathered during the investigation including a determination of whether well interference occurred, and if so who were the responsible parties.

[Will the Technical Report be made available to the public?](#)

The Technical Report is sent certified mail to the homeowner/well owner and all high-capacity appropriators involved in the investigation. The local SWCD or comparable government agency is sent an electronic copy. The public may request a copy by submitting a DNR Data Request Form.

[How long does it take for a Well Interference Investigation?](#)

Determining whether a well interference complaint is valid or not valid can take anywhere from a few weeks to a year. We work hard to analyze the data as fast as we can but we also have to wait for people to submit data. Sometimes we have to wait until we can run an aquifer test. Sometimes we just need a few months of monitoring. Each situation is different.

[How does the DNR determine whether a well interference occurred?](#)

The specifics of how DNR investigates a well interference complaint are different in each situation. The DNR will visit/inspect the well, meet with driller, take measurements and photos, request nearby water-use records, evaluate nearby groundwater level data, and evaluate well history and construction.

[What action does DNR take if the appropriator is found responsible for well interference?](#)

From the time of notification, the appropriator has 30 days to decide one of three options: 1) Modify or restrict the permit; 2) Negotiate a reasonable agreement; 3) Request a public hearing. Typically, if the Well Interference investigation is found valid a settlement can be negotiated with the high-capacity water user(s) to reimburse homeowners for some or all of their costs to restore their domestic water supply.

[How long does it take to complete a well interference investigation?](#)

The timeline from submitting a complaint to closing the investigation typically takes 3-6 months. With willing neighbors, the time may be reduced to several weeks. In complex cases with multiple homeowners or multiple appropriators, or limited data on area aquifers, an aquifer test may need to be conducted. These tests can sometimes be completed in autumn, other times it is necessary to wait until the following spring.

Can a well interference decision be appealed?

Yes, [Minnesota Rules, part 6115.0730](#) allows for the opportunity of a public hearing.

What if I have question or need more information?

You can contact the state Well Interference Coordinator at 651-259-5034 or view additional resources on the DNR Well Interference webpage

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/interference.html