



## Drought Guidance for Homeowners on Residential Wells

Approximately 40% of New Hampshire's residents rely on their own wells for a water supply. During previous droughts, some residential wells experienced impacts, including water quality issues, unreliable supplies, and total well failure. Below, you will find information and resources related to minimizing well impacts during drought, identifying symptoms of a well supply shortage, remedying well supply issues, and seeking alternative sources of supply.

Current drought conditions, drought guidance, and drought resource information are available on the [NHDES Drought Management webpage](#).

### Identifying and Addressing Drought Impacts

Typically, certain types of wells are more prone to water supply problems when drought conditions are present. These wells include dug wells, shallow bedrock wells, wells located near topographic high points, and wells constructed in areas where bedrock is close to the ground surface. Most homeowners do not have the means of determining a well's water level, although symptoms of a shortage in water supply can be obvious and may include:

- No water.
- Sudden drops in water pressure or pressure surges.
- Air bubbles coming out of non-aerated faucets.
- Cloudy or heavily silted water.

The cause of these symptoms may be a shortage of water or other problems associated with the well casing, valves, waterlines, pumps, or pressure tanks. It is important to work with a licensed pump installer and/or well driller to diagnose the problem and determine the appropriate corrective action to take. It is also advisable to act early, because the demand and wait time for well drillers and pump installers during drought increases.

To address a water supply shortage or a total well failure, see the NHDES fact sheet, [DWGB-1-16 Water Supply Options for Homeowners on Residential Wells During Drought](#). The fact sheet provides guidance on the following:

- Where to find information about the type and depth of your well.
- Contact information for a certified water well contractor or pump installer.
- Well improvement options.
- Financing a well improvement project.
- Alternative water supplies.
- Safety and sanitation.

NHDES Web Site: [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)

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## **Avoiding a Well Water Supply Shortage**

Abide by water restrictions implemented by your municipality and consider water usage recommendations made by state agencies. Pursuant to [RSA 41:11-d](#), municipalities, including village districts, have the authority to restrict lawn watering during a drought. The restrictions can apply to homeowners and businesses relying on their own wells as well as customers purchasing water from a public water system. The purpose of these types of restrictions is to ensure the community's essential and critical needs continue to be met, as well as to prevent water shortages for residents on private wells due to other users' non-essential water use.

Not all municipalities choose to restrict lawn watering during drought. This does not mean that supplies are sufficient to meet your needs. Track drought conditions and recommendations on the [NHDES Drought Management webpage](#) and take action early to prevent supply shortages.

Below are recommendations to help reduce stress on your water supply:

- Spread out the timing of water use so that multiple water uses do not co-occur and so the well has time to replenish between uses.
- Cut out non-essential uses, such as outdoor water use for lawn watering, car washing, and pressure washing. This can reduce a household's water use by 30-50%.
- Cut back on shower times, only do full loads of laundry, and turn off the faucet while brushing teeth, doing dishes, shaving, and washing hands.
- Replace old water fixtures and appliances that are wasting water. Top-loading clothes washing machines built before 2003 and toilets older than 1994 are known to be the largest water-wasting culprits in the home. Showerheads older than 1994 and older bathroom sink aerators can also waste a great deal of water. Selecting ENERGY STAR® certified machines and WaterSense certified fixtures is an easy way to ensure you are choosing products that will save water and still perform well. For guidance on selecting ENERGY STAR® and WaterSense certified products and for more water efficiency tips, see [NHDES water efficiency fact sheets](#).
- Fix leaks, including running toilets. Running toilets can waste hundreds of gallons a day. Some toilet leaks cannot be seen or heard. To check for these types of leaks, drop food coloring (5 drops) or a dye tablet in the toilet tank. Do not flush for 15 to 20 minutes. If the dye shows up in the bowl, you know that your toilet is leaking. Old and worn toilet flappers are often the culprit and are very easy and inexpensive to replace.



## **Private Well Owner Financial Assistance**

Low-income private well owners having water supply issues with their well may be eligible for financial assistance through the [Residential Well Financial Assistance Program](#) offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

## **For Additional Information**

Please direct questions and concerns to the appropriate contact on the [Drought Contact List](#).

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