

How to Hire a Water Well Contractor

What You Need to Know

Prior to selecting a water well contractor for a job, it is a good idea to obtain information about several contractors in the area before making a choice. Here are some considerations:

- Is the contractor licensed by the state? (Not all states require licensing.)
- Is the contractor certified through the National Ground Water Association? The highest level a contractor can achieve is MGWC (Master Ground Water Contractor), passing all specialty NGWA certification exams and a general exam.
- Does the contractor submit well logs?
- Does the contractor have adequate equipment in good condition to do the job?
- Does the contractor have adequate liability and workers' compensation insurance to protect you?
- Is the contractor familiar with applicable health and safety codes?
- What is the contractor's reputation with previous customers?
- Will the contractor furnish a written contract specifying the terms and conditions of the job?
- Is the contractor a member of the National Ground Water Association? Does he have a current NGWA sticker on his truck? NGWA members support the industry, have access to new technology and improved approaches, are dedicated to quality of workmanship, and promote and protect the groundwater resource. They know their stuff and will work with you to get the job done right. You can contact the NGWA customer service department at (800) 551-7379 or visit NGWA's Web site for well owners, www.wellowner.org, and click on "Contractor Lookup" for a list of member contractors in your area.

Written Contracts

It is important to obtain a written contract when preparing to have a well constructed. Unless you know what each contractor will do for his specified price, you cannot compare offers and decide which one to hire. NGWA makes available standard contract forms to its members. For a drilled well, the contract might include:

- Liability insurance coverage held by both the owner and the contractor
- A statement that all work is to comply with local and state regulations and codes
- The diameter and well thickness of the casing to be used
- The type of well development and yield evaluation procedures to be used
- The type of screen to be installed, where needed
- The type of well cap or seal to be provided
- The disinfection procedure
- The cleanup after drilling, which includes all material abandoned without authorization at a drill site except drill cuttings and wastewater

- An anticipated date for start of drilling
- A guarantee of materials and workmanship. The contract should specify that the contractor will return to do or to correct the initial work if necessary.

Costs

An itemized list of charges is better than a lump sum. The list could include:

- Cost of drilling per foot
- Cost of casing per foot
- Cost of other materials such as drive shoe, grout, and well cap
- Cost of other operations such as grouting, developing (if longer than one hour, as in screened wells), test pumping, and disinfection
- Cost of drilling deeper and/or second well, if required to ensure an adequate water supply
- Cost of abandonment should it prove necessary (for instance, if saltwater is encountered and another site is selected)
- What costs are not included in the specifications.

Finished Well Checklist

After the well has been constructed and before the contractor removes his equipment from the site, you should inspect the well. Here is a list of items to check.

Well Depth—This is easily done by tying a weight on a tape. Verify the measurement against the well construction report made out by the contractor.

Well Yield—Ask the contractor at how many gallons per minute (gpm) the well was tested, what distance the water level dropped during the test, and how quickly the water level recovered after the test.

Well Cap—Ensure that the well is capped and secure and that the cap is at least 6 inches above ground level.

Disinfection—Ask the contractor if the well was disinfected.

Well Construction Record—Make certain that you receive your copy of the well record. The contractor is required to deliver copies of the record to the owner. It would be advisable to keep your well record with your house deed so that the information is passed on to future owners.

Keep in Mind . . .

- Trust the contractor's judgment in solving unforeseen difficulties that may come up, and discuss unforeseen costs.
- If original construction plans must be changed, discuss the options with the contractor.
- Don't expect the contractor to work for free if the well does not fulfill expectations.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on your private water well, contact your local contractor. Also, visit the Web site of the National Ground Water Association, www.ngwa.org, and its site just for well owners, www.wellowner.org.