

NEWS RELEASE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEP OFFERS INFORMATION TO PRIVATE WELL OWNERS RELATED TO THE DROUGHT

PITTSBURGH (Aug 4) -- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary James M. Seif says Pennsylvania private well owners should arm themselves with knowledge and conservation measures to get through the current drought emergency.

"The best thing well owners can do is to continue and improve conservation practices," Seif said.

Statewide, about one million Pennsylvanians get their drinking water from private wells.

"Homeowners should know some basic information about their well," Seif said. "That information should include the well's location, construction, depth, water entry zones and a general description of rock strata."

Pennsylvania's Act 610 requires that well drillers obtain a Pennsylvania Water Well Drilling License and drilling rig permit. Licensed well drillers are responsible for completing, signing and submitting well records to the Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic survey, with a copy to the well owner. One copy must be maintained for at least 10 years by the licensed driller.

"If a water supply is impacted by drought conditions, information about the depth and type of well is valuable to the well driller or hydrogeologist if a new or deep well is attempted," Seif said. "A homeowner who doesn't have a copy of his or her well record should call their well driller or the Pennsylvania Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey at to get a copy."

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey can be reached at (717) 787-2169.

Homeowners who suspect their well water yield is impacted by the drought, should learn the depth of the groundwater level in the well and where the well pump is set. This information can be obtained by consulting a Registered Professional Geologist experienced in hydrogeology. A professional geologist can help homeowners make an informed decision about drilling deeper or reconstructing the original water well.

A professional geologist also can help a well owner determine the volume of water that exists in the well as storage. Storage capacity can be determined by knowing the depth of the well and the water table.

The casing for most wells is 6" in diameter. One-and-a-half gallons of water are estimated to be in every foot in the 6" diameter water well. If a homeowner has a 100' of water in the well, there will be approximately be 150 gallons of water.

Most Pennsylvania water wells are drilled shallow to the first water bearing zone, or the water table aquifer. Shallow wells in a shallow water table are often affected by a drought first. Drilling deeper may yield better water producing zones and provide more storage capacity in a well.

"Well owners need to know about subsurface conditions before they attempt to drill a deeper well," Seif said. "Some areas of Pennsylvania are undermined and a water supply could be lost if it is drilled into a mine void."

In some areas of the state, partially confined or confined aquifers may exist. The confined aquifer contains water trapped between two relatively impermeable layers of rock. Groundwater from wells drilled into these aquifers are generally not impacted by drought conditions and may be attractive targets for new water supplies.

The cost of an average 200 foot well including well construction, pump and piping will run about \$2,700.

"Conservation is still essential for all of us to protect our water supplies," Seif said.

Household faucets use approximately three to five gallons of water per minute (gpm), showers, five to 10 gpm, dishwashers 15-25 gallons and washing machines 35 gallons per wash load.

Conservation measures include:

- Wash only full loads of dishes and laundry.
- Wash dishes in two dishpans (one with soap and one with rinse water).
- Shower instead of using the bathtub and turn off the faucet while soaping up.
- Place a jug of cold water in the refrigerator instead of letting the tap water run.
- Replace dripping faucets with water saving fixtures.

- Capture water when you are running it to get hot or cold and use to water flowers and shrubs.

On July 20, Gov. Ridge declared 55 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties to be in a drought emergency. A drought emergency requires Pennsylvania homeowners and businesses to cut all non-essential water use. The restrictions affect residents who get their water from public systems, as well as those who use private wells.

For more information on the drought, including videos on how to conserve water and how the drought impacts a garden, visit the DEP through the Pennsylvania homepage at www.state.pa.us or directly at www.dep.state.pa.us (choose Drought Emergency).

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