

# WELLHEAD PROTECTION PROGRAM

City of Sebastopol  
Drinking Water Source Protection Program

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What Is Source Water Protection?

Taking proactive measures to prevent the pollution of lakes, rivers, streams, springs and ground water that serve as sources of drinking water. In the case of Sebastopol, all of our water supply comes from deep wells.

### Why should drinking water source protection matter to you?

- Water is essential to all life and the only water we'll ever have is what we have right now.
- The quality of drinking water affects public health and the economic well being of communities.
- Once water is contaminated, it's *costly* (and sometimes not feasible) to clean up the contamination and/or develop new sources.

### How are protection zones defined?

The zones are defined by the approximate distance ground water could travel towards the well in two, five and ten years. The distances are determined by a method that considers the characteristics of the well, the geology of the area and the direction of ground water flow. For this method, the zones are a set of three circles around the wells.

### What do the zones mean?

- The zones are only a line on paper--they do not of themselves stop contaminants from getting into the water supply.
- The zones represent an area through which you can reasonably expect that the contaminants could reach the well if not properly controlled.
- The zones are used to prioritize an area for detailed review of activities that have the potential of releasing contaminants.
- Within the zones, the City can take measures to prevent pollution of the ground water, or respond to contamination events that threaten the water supply

### What types of activities are considered possible sources of contamination?

Possible sources of contamination include any activity that involves the use, storage, production or disposal of chemicals that have the potential to contaminate ground water. It is important to identify historic activities as well as those currently taking place.

Examples include:

#### URBAN AREAS

- Gas Stations
- Dry Cleaners
- Railroad Operations
- Automobile Repair Shops
- Sewer Lines
- Manufacturing

#### RURAL AREAS

- Septic Systems
- Agriculture (e.g. irrigation, pesticide application or livestock)

#### GENERAL

- Abandoned wells
- Transportation corridors

## What can be done to protect the water supply from contamination?

There are many methods that can be used to protect the water supply, ranging from the simple and inexpensive to the difficult and costly. The methods can be regulatory or non-regulatory in nature. Finding the appropriate methods for Sebastopol is a local decision. Citizens may choose to be involved in the decision-making process through participation on a Community Planning Team.

Examples of non-regulatory methods:

- **Public Education** - getting the word out to citizens and businesses that their actions (or inactivity) could result in contamination of the ground water.
- **Water Quality Monitoring** - not just at the drinking water well, but in monitoring wells that can provide an "early warning system".
- **Hazardous Waste Collection** - through our membership in the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, Sebastopol is provided with Household Hazardous Waste and Used Oil collections and other programs to properly dispose of toxic substances that can threaten our ground water.
- **Emergency response planning** - what actions do you take in the event of a spill or leak to prevent the material from getting into the ground water?
- **Encouraging "good environmental habits"** by residents and businesses.

Examples of regulatory methods:

- **Fuel Tank Monitoring** - requiring more stringent monitoring for tanks within the zones.
- **Land Use/Zoning** - controlling the type, location and/or density of certain land uses.
- **Hazardous materials handling regulations** - for use and disposal of toxic materials. What does it mean if my business engages in an activity that is considered a "possible contaminating activity" and is in a protection zone?

The City may implement a number of options which may include:

- An increased level of review of certain activities and permitted uses.
- Encouragement and support to use Best Management Practices (BMPs) for use, storage and disposal of hazardous materials.

### **What does it mean if my house is located within a protection zone?**

- Encouragement and support to use, store and dispose of hazardous materials properly, for residences and home-based businesses.
- Encouragement to repair and/or upgrade septic systems, especially in zones close to a water supply.
- Increased efforts to identify the location of wells and underground storage tanks.

### **Where can I find more information about Source Water Protection?**

There are many documents published by the US Environmental Protection Agency and various organizations. Contact the **California Department of Health Services**, Drinking Water Program, at 707-576-2295 for a list of resources.

In addition, the Department of Health Services has an Internet Web Site that provides information about the California Drinking Water Source Assessment and Protection Program:

*<http://www.dhs.cahwnet.gov/org/ps/ddwem/publications/wsapp/dwspindex.htm>*

Who can I call for more information about the City of Sebastopol Wellhead Protection Program?

Please Contact Us

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