

## Resource protection wells

### Introduction

In Chapter 173-160-410 (13) WAC (Washington Administrative Code) it defines a resource protection well as “a cased boring intended or used to collect subsurface information or to determine the existence or migration of pollutants within an underground formation. Resource protection wells include monitoring wells, observation wells, piezometers, spill response wells, remediation wells, environmental investigation wells, vapor extraction wells, ground source heat pump boring, grounding wells, and instrumentation wells.”

Currently, the most common use of a resource protection well is as a piezometer (for water level measurements). The most common casing is Schedule 40 PVC casing. The average depth is about 15-feet. And the most common installation method is with a hollow-stem auger. Hundreds of these wells are constructed and decommissioned in Washington every year.

### Q: Who can construct or decommission a resource protection well?

**A:** A Washington State resource protection well operator’s license is required.

### Q: Who is exempt from the licensing requirement?

**A:** Chapter 18.104.180 RCW (Revised Code of Washington) exempts Washington State licensed engineers, architects, and land surveyors from further licensing requirements. These persons must comply with all other requirements of law and rule and they must directly supervise the work.

### Q: What do I need to do first when I construct a resource protection well?

**A:** Make sure a NOI (Notice of Intent) has been sent to Ecology and the required fees (variable, see FAQ for “*well drilling fees*” or Chapter 173-160-420 WAC for complete list) have been paid.

### WHY IT MATTERS

This is a summary of questions and answers regarding the laws and regulations of resource protection wells.

The licensed well driller is responsible for understanding:

- Chapter 18.104 RCW: the Water Well Construction Act (1971)
- Chapter 173-160 WAC: Minimum standards for Construction and Maintenance of Wells, and
- Chapter 173-162 WAC: Rules and Regulations Governing the Regulation and Licensing of Well Contractors and Operators.

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**Q: Who is responsible for submitting the NOI?**

**A:** It is the responsibility of the property owner (or owner's agent) to inform Ecology that a resource protection well will be constructed or decommissioned 72-hours in advance of any work. It is the drillers' responsibility to make sure that no work occurs until that time has passed.

**Q. Do I file a well report if I construct or decommission a resource protection well?**

**A:** A resource protection well report must be filed with Ecology within 30 days of completion of construction or decommissioning the well, one report per well construction and one report per well decommissioning. If you decommission a well that has a tag, it must be sent to Ecology with the decommissioning well report.

**Q: Which resource protection wells are exempt from fees?**

**A:** Environmental investigation wells used only for soil and/or vapor sampling and geotechnical soils borings are exempt from all drilling fees. Also, decommissioning of any environmental investigation well is exempt from fees.

**Q: I contracted for geotechnical soil borings and filed a NOI for geotechnical soil borings but now the customer wants a monitoring well, what do I do?**

**A:** If you have filed a NOI for the soil borings and the scope of the project changes, regulations (WAC 173-160-420 (9) (f)) allow you to construct the additional wells and file a NOI for those additional wells after construction. Just be sure to send the new NOI and the required fees to Ecology within 24-hours after completion of the wells.

**Q: Do I install a tag on a resource protection well?**

**A:** The driller is responsible for tagging every resource protection well that they construct within 30 days of completion of the well. Geotechnical soil borings and environmental investigation wells are exempt from this requirement.

**Q. What do I need to do first when I decommission a resource protection well?**

**A:** Make sure a NOI has been sent to Ecology and the required fees (most wells require a fee of \$20 per well) have been paid.

**Q. Who is responsible for decommissioning a resource protection well?**

**A:** The property owner is responsible for decommissioning the well.