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WELL SAID NEWSLETTER

Available on the web at OWRD home page, under *Agency Spotlight > Well Said Newsletter*. Please share with others at your organization. *Well Said* is a production of the OWRD Well Construction Section and is designed to inform the drilling industry and the public about program activities and other items of interest.

For questions, suggestions, or to subscribe to this newsletter, contact Kristopher Byrd at (503) 991-2470 or email at Kristopher.R.Byrd@water.oregon.gov



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OWRD SEEKS INCREASED COMPLIANCE WITH STATIC WATER LEVEL MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Members of the well drilling community can expect to see an increase in requests for measurement of static water levels (SWLs) from well owners this fall and in the spring of 2026. The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) is seeking to increase compliance with the requirement to measure and report static water

levels in most groundwater rights issued since the 1990s. These measurements provide essential data that helps OWRD monitor and manage groundwater resources effectively.

Any Oregon licensed well constructor, certified water rights examiner, Oregon registered professional geologist, Oregon registered professional engineer, or individuals whose primary occupation involves wholly or in significant part pump installation, service or testing are qualified to take the measurement. Water right holders will need to examine their water right to determine if they have this requirement and when a measurement is required, but most commonly the measurements are required in the spring (March/April).

Water rights holders subject to SWL requirements are out of compliance if they do not take SWL measurements and report them to OWRD. This fall, OWRD will begin issuing Notices of Violation (NOVs) for failure to report in 2025. Those out of compliance with the requirement will have the opportunity to come into compliance in 2026. Starting in spring 2026, water rights holders out of compliance with SWL requirements will be ordered to stop water use and may be assessed civil penalties.

With approximately 3,600 points of appropriation required to measure and report, increased compliance will supplement the data collected by OWRD, aiding in the assessment of local groundwater conditions and trends. Please join us in helping groundwater rights holders understand and comply with the requirement to measure and report static water levels (SWL) in their wells. Your role in this process is vital to ensuring the sustainability of our groundwater resources.

Find more information online at <https://owrd.info/staticwaterlevel>
Contact us: OWRD.WaterLevelReporting@water.oregon.gov or 971-720-0864.

OCTOBER 2025 WELL CONSTRUCTOR LICENSE EXAM

The next Well Constructor exam is scheduled for October 13, 2025, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, at the Oregon Water Resources Department's (OWRD) office in Salem.

To sign up for the exam, please complete the application to take the exam and mail it to the Salem office with a check or money order in the amount of \$25.00 **prior to exam day**.

If an examinee does not pay in advance of the exam, they are encouraged to contact the licensing specialist **prior to exam day** to ensure that space is available. Additionally, folks who choose to pay with cash on the day of the exam should bring **exact change**.

The study guide, which contains the exam application and other exam materials, e.g., practice exams and video tutorials, may be found on the OWRD website under [Licensing Exam Information](#).

Here are the results of the July Well Constructor exam:

- Three water supply well license examinees passed the exam and were issued licenses after providing proof of their well drilling experience.
- Two monitoring well license examinees passed the exam and were issued licenses after providing proof of their well drilling experience.

For information regarding the exam, please contact the Well Licensing Specialist, Buffy Madrigal-Adams at (971) 287-8305 or Buffy.M.Madrigal-Adams@water.oregon.gov

CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) has updated the Well Constructor Continuing Education web page making it more accessible from the Department's home page. The web-page has consolidated all the hyperlinks and made information more readily available. Included on the page are the minimum requirements for continuing education credits (CECs), course sponsoring, and the current Continuing Education Committee (CEC) members. The CEC meeting agenda and minutes are also available on the page for review. To stay up to date on continuing education, please sign up in [GovDelivery](#) to receive email notifications.

There are currently **three vacancies** on the Continuing Education Committee. OWRD is seeking new members, one with **safety experience**, one with **groundwater quality expertise**, and a **licensed well constructor**; committee members must reside in Oregon. Members review coursework to determine if the material is eligible for credits, how many credits the course is eligible for and what category should be assigned (rule/statute, general education, safety, hazmat or exhibition). Members serve 3-year terms and meet virtually 4-5 times per year.

For those interested in joining the committee or if you have questions regarding the continuing education requirements, please contact the Well Licensing Specialist, Buffy Madrigal-Adams, at Buffy.M.Madrigal-Adams@water.oregon.gov or (971) 287-8305.

CHANGES TO WATER LAW - EXEMPT USES

The foundation of Oregon's water law is the concept that water is a public resource, not a private resource belonging to landowners. This means that, with some exceptions, a water right is required to use water from any source. However, certain uses are exempt from requiring a valid water right or permit if water is used beneficially and without waste.

Beginning January 1, 2026, Oregon House Bill 3372 (2025) will allow domestic water supply well owners to use up to 3,000 gallons per day to irrigate up to ½ acre of lawn, personal garden, or commercial garden.

Key Details:

- **Size & Limit:** Applies only to gardens up to ½ acre; larger irrigation sites continue to require a water right.
- **Daily Cap:** 3,000 gallons per day, with a **5,000-gallon cap** for combined commercial/industrial use.
- **Exclusions:** Cannot be used for watering **marijuana or unregistered hemp** grown for commercial purposes. Registered hemp, medical marijuana, and personal-use marijuana crops remain covered under existing exemptions.
- **Geographic Limit:** Does not apply in the **Lower Umatilla Groundwater Management Area** until at least 2028.
- **Enforcement:** Until the law takes effect, OWRD may enforce current rules, but compliance efforts will focus on education first.
- **Measurement:** The bill does not require new measurement obligations; however, OWRD retains authority to require measurement devices.

This change is intended to give small farms and commercial gardeners more flexibility while balancing water use protections. Please contact your local watermaster for guidance regarding legal water access and compliance with Oregon's water laws. Find your local watermaster at: [Oregon Water Resources Department : Regional Offices and Watermasters Directory](#).

ENSURING PROPER CASING HEIGHT WHEN DEEPENING WELLS

During recent inspections of deepened wells, the Department has identified several cases where the well casing does not meet the required minimum height of **12 inches** above land surface, the pump house floor, or the local surface runoff level. This requirement is a critical component of Oregon's well construction standards and must be met for any well that is deepened.

When a well is deepened, it must either already comply with current construction standards or be recased and resealed to bring it into compliance. Over time, site conditions around wells can change, and one of the most commonly affected features is the casing height. Ensuring the casing remains at the proper elevation is essential for protecting groundwater and maintaining well integrity.

If a well casing is found to be out of compliance, **it must be corrected before the well constructor leaves the site**. For wells located in **vaults**, the casing must be raised to at least 12 inches above land surface, and the vault must be filled with an approved grout. Similarly, for wells located inside **pump houses**, the casing must extend 12 inches above the concrete floor or pad. **Regardless of the setting, the 12-inch casing height requirement must be met.**

The Department's Start Card e-file application includes a built-in validation feature that flags wells located within a 100-year flood zone. This helps ensure that casing height requirements are appropriately considered in flood-prone areas. Well constructors who need assistance determining the correct casing height for wells in these zones are encouraged to contact their [regional well inspector](#).

Continued next page

Proper Casing Height, cont'd

For those considering deepening a well, it is important to consult with the regional well inspector before proceeding. Approval decisions are based on information provided in the well report, so complete and accurate documentation is essential. If a well is approved for deepening, the constructor is responsible for addressing all site-specific construction requirements, including any necessary casing height adjustments.

For questions about deepening wells, contact Tommy Laird, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at (503) 302-8618 or Tommy.K.Laird@water.oregon.gov.

WATER SUPPLY WELLS - CONTINUOUS SEALS

Sealing a water supply well into a consolidated formation requires careful attention to materials and methods to ensure the aquifer remains protected. When using a continuous seal, constructors may need to employ multiple types of grout and placement techniques to achieve a suitable seal.

For wells with a borehole at least **four** inches larger than the nominal casing size, a variety of grout materials may be used. However, unhydrated bentonite comes with limitations, it can only be used to a depth of **200 feet** and must not pass through more than **50 feet** of water. Additionally, if temporary casing is involved, bentonite cannot be used in the water-filled interval between the temporary and permanent casing.

In cases where the borehole is smaller, such as **two** inches larger than the casing, the options for grout materials become more limited. To ensure an effective seal in these situations, constructors must follow specific grout placement methods and use approved grout materials as outlined in the well construction rules.

Some constructors opt for a **split-seal** approach when sealing wells in consolidated formations. In these instances, it is required to fill the annular space between the upper and lower sealing intervals with grout using an approved method. This step is critical to maintaining the integrity of the seal and protecting the aquifer.

When submitting a well report, drillers must detail **all** sealing methods and materials used during construction. This includes the depth of the seal, the calculated amount of seal material required, and the actual amount used. The report must also include the date and time of seal placement. Importantly, a seal placement notification is only required if the sealing date **differs** from the proposed date listed on the start card.

For more information regarding sealing methods, contact Travis Kelly, Well Construction Compliance Coordinator, at (971) 304-5079 or Travis.N.Kelly@water.oregon.gov.

PITLESS ADAPTERS

A pitless adapter is a commercially manufactured unit designed to attach to a well casing to allow water service pipes to pass through the wall of the well casing and prevent entrance of contaminants into the well and the groundwater.

Installing a pitless adapter does **not** require an Oregon water well constructors license and may be done by a pump installer or landowner. If the landowner plans on having a pitless adapter installed, then the rules require that the sealing interval be sealed with unhydrated bentonite. This requirement is in place because a cement grout seal would be damaged or destroyed if altered during a pitless adapter installation.

Because well inspectors have recently inspected wells where the landowner has installed a pitless adapter and not properly replaced the seal, the Department would like to ask the well construction industry that if they know that a well owner is planning to have a pitless adapter installed, that they either recommend to the well owner that they contact a professional well driller, or they recommend that the well owner contact the Department. This way either the installation will be done properly by the licensed driller, or the Department can inform the landowner of the requirements.

For more information regarding pitless adapters, please contact Tommy Laird, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at Tommy.K.Laird@water.oregon.gov or (503) 302-8618.

WELL ALTERATIONS REQUIRE PROPER AUTHORIZATION

The Department would like to remind property owners, licensed pump installers, and others that any alteration to a well's construction, including the installation or removal of liners, is classified as a well alteration under state regulations. These activities require either a landowner's permit or must be performed by a licensed and bonded water supply well constructor.



In recent field inspections, additional alterations have been observed, such as:

- Cutting down well casing to accommodate turbine pump installations
- Removing seal material to adjust for changes in surface grade

These types of changes, along with any other material modifications to a well, must be carried out in compliance with state requirements. That means either:

- A licensed and bonded well constructor must perform the work, or
- A landowner must obtain a landowner's permit and supply the required bond.

Ensuring that well alterations are done properly helps protect groundwater resources and maintain the integrity of Oregon's water infrastructure.

If you have questions about whether a planned activity qualifies as a well alteration, please contact Tommy Laird, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at Tommy.K.Laird@water.oregon.gov or (503) 302-8618.

MONITORING WELLS AND PIEZOMETERS

When submitting a monitoring well report, it is essential to clearly and accurately identify the type of monitoring well that was constructed. This detail is more than just a formality, it ensures that the well meets the appropriate construction standards and that the data collected serves its intended purpose.

Monitoring wells play a critical role in understanding groundwater conditions. They are specifically designed to assess the physical, chemical, biological, or radiological properties of groundwater. These wells are often used to track improvements in water quality during site cleanups, detect the early spread of contamination, and gather data on water table levels or other aquifer characteristics.

Among the various types of monitoring wells, piezometers stand out for their specialized function. Unlike other monitoring wells, piezometers are designed solely to measure groundwater levels. Because of their limited scope, they are not permitted in areas where contamination is known or reasonably suspected. This restriction helps ensure that groundwater data from contaminated sites remains reliable and that the wells themselves do not become pathways for contaminant migration.

Accurately identifying the type of well constructed helps the department avoid unnecessary follow-up with drillers and ensures that the right data is collected for the right purpose. Monitoring wells on contaminated sites are built to protect groundwater and provide long-term water quality data, while piezometers are used to obtain precise static water levels at specific intervals. Both serve important but distinct roles in groundwater monitoring and management.

For more information regarding monitoring wells, please contact Tommy Laird, Well Construction Program Coordinator, at Tommy.K.Laird@water.oregon.gov or (503) 302-8618.

GEOTECHNICAL HOLE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Geotechnical holes play a vital role in understanding subsurface conditions across a wide range of projects—from construction and transportation to landslide mitigation and environmental assessments. These borings help engineers, geologists, landowners, and others, gather critical data to make informed decisions.

In Oregon, specific criteria activate the requirement to submit a geotechnical hole report. A report must be filed if the hole meets any of the following conditions:

- Exceeds 18 feet in depth
- Lies within 50 feet of a water supply or monitoring well
- Is used to determine water quality
- Is constructed in an area of known or reasonably suspected contamination

Common Reporting Mistakes

As the department continues to review submitted reports, a recurring issue has surfaced: certain types of borings are being incorrectly classified. Specifically, cathodic protection holes, pneumatic (vibrating wire) and electrical piezometers, and slope inclinometers are often marked as both “new” and “abandoned.” This dual classification is inaccurate.

These installations, while typically grouted after completion, are designed to serve an ongoing function. They are not considered permanently abandoned unless decommissioned by a registered professional. In such cases, a separate geotechnical hole report must be submitted to document the abandonment, referencing the original report.

Reporting Reminder

When submitting geotechnical hole reports, ensure that functional borings are marked only as “new.” Reserve the “abandoned” designation for holes that have been formally decommissioned. Accurate reporting helps maintain regulatory compliance and supports the integrity of data across the state.

For questions regarding geotechnical holes, contact Linda Walker, Geotechnical Hole Program Coordinator, at (971) 287-8201 or Linda.K.Walker@water.oregon.gov.

NEW STAFF CALEB PUSZKIEWICZ, NEW SOUTH-CENTRAL REGION WELL INSPECTOR

Please join the Oregon Water Resources Department in welcoming Caleb Puskiewicz as the new South-Central Region Well Inspector working out of the Klamath Falls office. Caleb's first official day as an inspector was July 1, 2025. Expect to see him around drill sites as he is inspecting wells in his assigned area of responsibility. Stay tuned for the January 2026 edition of the Well Said for Caleb's biography.

Caleb may be contacted at Caleb.E.Puskiewicz@water.oregon.gov or (971) 718-2222.

MEET CARLEY MAYES

The Oregon Water Resources Department is excited to welcome Carley Mayes as the Central Region Well Inspector out of the Bend office. Carley is originally from a river community in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California, where growing up with access to public lands sparked both a love for the outdoors and a commitment to protecting natural resources. She earned a bachelor's degree in Geology from the University of Utah, contributing to research on water systems in the Great Salt Lake Basin, and later completed a graduate certificate in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) from Pennsylvania State University.

She has worked in both the public and private sectors with a focus on land use and water resources. She began her career as a Geologist for an environmental consulting firm, conducting field investigations and assisting with the remediation of contaminated sites. She later served as an Environmental Health Specialist in county government, overseeing septic and well installations and working with landowners, contractors, and local agencies to support responsible land use and groundwater protection. Her work has centered on balancing the development needs of communities with the protection of the natural resources they depend on; experience she brings to her role as a well inspector.

In her free time, she enjoys photography, learning new skills, and exploring rivers, trails and public lands with her dogs at her side.

Carley is located at the Bend office and can be reached at Carley.N.Mayes@water.oregon.gov or (971) 493-9414.



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LIGHTNING SAFETY

Summer and fall thunderstorms bring a serious but often overlooked jobsite hazard: lightning. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA 29 CFR 1926.28 and 1926.21), requires that employers protect workers from known hazards—including severe weather. For crews working in open areas with tall equipment, rigs, and metal tools, lightning awareness is critical.

1. Know the Risk

Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from a storm. If you hear thunder, you are already within strike range. Drilling sites, open fields, and elevated rigs increase exposure.

2. Take Shelter Early

- The safest place is inside a fully enclosed building or a hard-topped vehicle with windows closed.
- Rigs, sheds with open sides, and trees, are not safe shelters.
- Follow OSHA's guidance: suspend outdoor work when thunderstorms are in the area.



3. Safe Work Practices

- Stop drilling and shut down equipment when storms approach.
- Move away from tall objects, water sources, and conductive materials.
- Avoid contact with metal tools, piping, and wirelines during storms.

4. The 30/30 Rule

- If the time between lightning and thunder is 30 seconds or less, stop work and seek shelter.
- Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder before resuming operations.

5. Emergency Preparedness

- Train crews on lightning response and first aid.
- If someone is struck by lightning, call 911 immediately. Victims do not carry an electrical charge, so begin CPR or first aid if trained.
- Document and review the incident per OSHA requirements.



FIRST AID

Lightning is unpredictable, but injuries are preventable with the right precautions. Plan ahead, act early, and never take chances in the storm. Protecting your crew from lightning means protecting lives. Please see the following OSHA safety article:

<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3863.pdf>

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Flowing Artesian Well Inspection in Southern Oregon



Raised Casing in the 100-Year Flood Zone



Well Constructor Welding Casing in Eastern Oregon



Well Inspection in Southern Oregon with a Furry Friend



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