

Connection to Municipal Water and Well Operation Permits

Frequently Asked Questions

After attachment to the City of Madison, will I be required to connect to municipal water or can I continue to use my private well for drinking water?

If municipal water is available, you are required to connect to the public water system within 180 days of the attachment date [Madison General Ordinance (MGO) 13.07]. If after connecting you are interested in keeping your private well for outdoor use only, you may do so after completing the permitting process. (Please see later section for details on permitting process)

A delayed connection also may be requested if the owner applies for and is granted a well operation permit. A delayed connection allows for the continued use of a legal and permitted well while arrangements are begin made to connect to municipal water. The term of a delayed connection order typically corresponds to that of the well operation permit.

What is the process for making a residential water service connection?

To establish water service, water service applications and associated fees must be submitted to the Madison Water Utility. The property owner is required to submit two applications, one to connect to their preferred water main, and the other for the meter. The service connection application for a standard residential size service (1"-2") has a \$110 inspection fee, and the fee for a residential (5/8") water meter application is \$173. Both applications can be handled by the plumber selected for the work, and are available on this website:

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/water/plumbers-contractors> or by calling (608) 266-4646.

An Excavation in the Right-of-Way permit may also be needed from City Engineering prior to performing any work in the roadway. Any private plumbing work will be subject to permits/inspections from the Building Inspection Division, as well. Questions regarding sanitary sewer requirements and fees can be addressed by City Engineering staff at (608) 266-4751. Once the applications and associated permits are approved, scheduling of the project will generally be coordinated by the plumber. After the service lateral is connected to the house, the owner will need to provide access to the inside of the house for utility staff to set the water meter.

Who is qualified to connect my property to municipal water?

The connection work must be completed by a licensed plumber who has been approved to do plumbing work in the City of Madison. When you contact contractors to obtain an estimate, please ask them if they are licensed and approved to perform work in the City of Madison. A list of prequalified contractors approved to work on utilities in the City right of way may also be found on the City of Madison Public Works Department web page.

What is the average cost of connecting to municipal water?

The cost of connecting to municipal water can vary from one property to another and depends on a number of factors. The primary factors include the size of service needed to meet your water needs; the setback distance from the water main to your home; the rates of the licensed contractor you choose and the complexity of the situation. Generally, the greater the setback distance from the water main to your home the greater the cost.

Madison Water Utility recommends obtaining bids from two to three licensed plumbers prior to selecting your contractor and signing a contract. We encourage you to get the estimated costs and the scheduled start date in writing from the contractor you plan to use. Additionally, it is important to check and see if there are any outstanding assessments for the property (costs or fees) which may have been incurred through recent work or the extension of utility service lines. You may contact our Operations Clerk Amy Jones at 608-266-4647 or ajones@madisonwater.org to determine if there are any outstanding assessments and she can also work to answer any questions you may have specific to the connection process.

What if my property does NOT have access to municipal water?

Private domestic wells are permitted in the City of Madison and if your property does not have access to municipal water you may continue to use your well as a source of drinking water. Madison General Ordinance (MGO) 13.21 does however require that a well operation permit be obtained from the Madison Water Utility in order to continue using the well.

What if municipal water is extended to serve my property in the future?

Once municipal water is available (the water main is extended), you will be required to connect to the public water system within 90 days unless a longer time frame is granted for the public works project. In the interim, your private well will continue to be the source of water for your home but you must obtain a well operation permit.

A delayed connection may be requested at the time of water main extension, if the well has a valid well operation permit. The term of an approved delayed connection order typically corresponds with that of the existing well operation permit, expiring at the same time. Connection to the municipal water system is required within 10 days of the expiration of a delayed connection or as otherwise agreed upon by the owner and utility.

What does the well operation permitting process involve?

A well operation permit application must be submitted and include the \$355 permit fee which covers the cost of a well inspection and required water quality tests. This fee includes up to four water samples, any additional sampling past this will cost an additional \$95/sample.

A member of Madison Water Utility staff will coordinate with the owner of the property to conduct the required well inspection and water sampling. The following criteria must be satisfied before a well operation permit can be issued:

1. The well and pump installation must meet or be upgraded to meet the requirements of Chapter NR 812 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. Any deficiencies that are identified during the inspection must be corrected at the well owner's expense.
2. The well must produce bacteriologically safe water; as evidenced by at least two safe samples (free of coliform bacteria including E. coli.) taken at least two weeks apart.
3. The well must not be cross-connected to the municipal water system.

If the well fulfills all three of these criteria, permits are valid for 5 years and are renewable. During the permitted period the property owner is required to submit annual test results for total coliform and nitrate by October 1st of each year. Well permits are non-transferable; new owners must obtain a permit in their name.

What if my well is unable to be permitted or connection is made to municipal water and the well will no longer be used?

If the well does not meet the criteria outlined above and is unable to be permitted or your property is connected to municipal water and will no longer be used, the well must be properly abandoned according to the requirements of Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter NR 812. The abandonment must be completed by a licensed well driller or pump installer.

What does abandonment of a well involve/ what does the term abandonment mean?

The term abandonment refers to the filling and sealing of a well with an approved, impermeable material such as bentonite chips, or neat cement. Properly abandoning a well is done in order to prevent groundwater contamination from unused, unsafe or non-complying wells, because wells are direct conduits to the groundwater table.

As of June 1, 2008, only licensed well drillers and pump installers can fill and seal wells in Wisconsin. These licensed professionals must follow the regulations codified in Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter NR 812. In addition, Madison Water Utility staff must be on site for any well abandonment performed in the City of Madison and must be notified 48 hours before an abandonment is scheduled. Please call (608) 266-4654 to notify the water quality section of any upcoming well abandonments or to ask any questions you may have. The utility maintains a courtesy list of local contractors qualified to perform this work.

What does it cost to properly abandon a private well?

The cost of a well abandonment depends on a number of factors; the primary ones being the depth of the well and whether the pump is present and needs to be pulled. A “typical” abandonment costs \$800 - \$2000 but may be more or less depending on the well depth; ease with which the pump can be removed; and the private contractors rates. Well drillers typically charge by the foot so deeper wells are more expensive to abandon than shallow wells.

Is any financial assistance available to help pay for the well abandonment?

The City of Madison may reimburse a property owner 50% of the cost, up to \$1000, to abandon a well. Details are available on our Private Wells web page or by contacting Madison Water Utility at (608) 266-4654.

Financial assistance may also be available through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR offers a limited number of income -based grants to help offset the cost to abandon an unused private wells.

Where can I go or who can I contact for more information regarding connection to municipal water and/or the Madison Water Utility’s private well program?

Please visit <https://www.cityofmadison.com/water/water-quality/private-wells> or contact one of the representatives listed below.

-Private Wells: Water Quality Section, 266-4654, water@madisonwater.org

-Water Service & Assessments: Amy Jones, 608-266-4647, ajones@madisonwater.org

-Sanitary Sewer: Mark Moder, 261-9250, mmoder@cityofmadison.com

-Septic Systems (POWTS): Public Health, 242-6515, privatewellseptic@publichealthmdc.com