



Ground Water Contamination

Did you know that 100% of Livingston County residents rely on ground water for their drinking water supply? Despite our drinking water being out of sight, it is still in danger of becoming polluted. Ground water contamination can occur when natural or man-made chemicals seep into underground water supplies. Possible sources of pollution can include:

- Landfills
- Chemical storage tanks
- Road salts
- Septic systems
- Improper hazardous waste disposal
- Pesticides
- Fertilizers

Contamination can lead to poor drinking water quality and high cleanup costs. In extreme cases, the contamination can result in serious health effects, or the loss of a water supply. Even though your drinking water may look and smell fine, it can still be harmful to your health. The Livingston County Health Department (LCHD) in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) evaluates private drinking water wells in areas of documented groundwater contamination. Staff from LCHD collect samples from these private wells routinely, and if contaminants are present, communicate with the well owner about potential health risks. In some cases, MDEQ replaces individual wells that have become contaminated.

While city/municipal water supplies are required to routinely monitor their water supply through State and Federal regulations, private drinking wells do not have these same safeguards. It is important for private well owners to be cautious of chemical spills and waste disposal on their property. It is also a good idea to limit the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Additionally, well owners can test their drinking water for chemicals if they suspect contamination has occurred or have experienced a change in taste, odor, or appearance of their water.

You can find more information about well maintenance and water testing on our website: www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/wells.aspx. Also feel free to consult with our Environmental Health professionals to discuss your questions or concerns about groundwater at 517-546-9858.

Sources: U.S. Geological Survey. (2018). The USGS Water Science School. Retrieved from: <https://water.usgs.gov/edu/>

United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2015). Ground Water Contamination - Getting Up to Speed. Retrieved from: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-08/documents/mgwc-gwc1.pdf>

Stay Informed: PFAS

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), are part of a group of chemicals used in manufacturing, firefighting and thousands of common household and consumer products all around the world, including Michigan. In recent years, scientists have linked these chemicals to various health effects. Some studies in people have shown that PFAS may:

- Affect growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children
- Lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant
- Interfere with the body's natural hormones
- Increase cholesterol levels
- Affect the immune system and
- Increase the risk of cancer

Elevated levels of these "forever chemicals" have been found throughout the Huron River watershed including several lakes within Livingston County: Ore Lake, Strawberry & Zukey Lakes, Gallagher Lake, Loon Lake, Whitewoods Lakes, and Baseline & Portage Lakes. As a result of these elevated levels, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has issued a 'Do Not Eat' fish advisory for these areas and has begun testing other water sources in the area for contamination. Stay up-to-date on the latest PFAS information by visiting:

www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse

Be SepticSmart!

Do you know how to properly care for and maintain your septic system?

Often times we don't think about septic systems until they fail, but did you know that there are simple everyday steps you can take to keep your septic system functioning? By being SepticSmart today, you can prevent unnecessary damage and costs in the future. Read the EPA's Do's and Don'ts of your septic system below:



Protect It and Inspect It:

Do:

Have your system inspected (in general) every three years by a licensed contractor and have the tank pumped, when necessary, generally every three to five years.

Think at the Sink:

Do:

- Eliminate or limit the use of a garbage disposal.
- Properly dispose of coffee grounds & food.
- Put grease in a container to harden before discarding in the trash.

Don't:

- Pour cooking grease or oil down the sink or toilet.
- Rinse coffee grounds into the sink.
- Pour household chemicals down the sink or flush them.

Don't Overload the Commode:

Do:

- Put non-degradable products or chemicals, such as feminine hygiene products, condoms, dental floss, diapers, cigarette butts, cat litter, paper towels, or pharmaceuticals in the trash.

Don't:

- Flush these items down the toilet.

Shield Your Field:

Do:

- Consult a septic service professional to advise you of the proper distance for planting trees and shrubs, depending on your septic tank location.

Don't:

- Park or drive on your drainfield. The weight can damage the drain lines.
- Plant trees or shrubs too close to your drainfield, roots can grow into your system and clog it.

Don't Strain Your Drain:

Do:

- Stagger the use of water-generating appliances. This can be helpful especially if your system has not been pumped in a long time.

Don't:

- Concentrate your water use by using your dishwasher, shower, washing machine, and toilet at the same time.

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2013). Do's and Don'ts of Your Septic System Fact Sheet. Retrieved from: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-07/documents/septicmart_week_flyer_082415_508-v2.pdf

CO POISONING: ARE YOU AT RISK?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is deadly a colorless and odorless gas. It is found in the fumes produced by burning fuel. People are most often exposed to CO while burning fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, or furnaces. If allowed to build up inside your home or garage, CO can poison the people and animals who breathe it.

Symptoms of CO poisoning include:

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Chest Pain
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Upset Stomach

You can prevent CO poisoning by installing battery operated CO detectors in your home, checking that all gas appliances are properly vented, and having your chimney checked or cleaned every year. It is also a good idea to have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician each year. Find more prevention tips here:

<https://bit.ly/2gxMSyn>



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