

Getting to know your Private Water Supply, and looking after it:

Abstraction point

- It is important that you know where your water comes from. Please find out, and check that your supply is registered with your Council.
- Abstraction points might be on someone else's land – this is not always obvious and may not be mapped on the deeds to your property.
- It is important that the abstraction point is protected from contaminants from surrounding land-use (e.g. farming, forestry, construction). Check and maintain the state of well caps, fencing, etc.

Pipes

- Knowing the route of the pipes from the abstraction point to your house is useful.
- Following the pipes may help to identify the location of any leaks or other damage.

Pumps & tanks

- Most supplies include a pump to move water to the house. Make sure it works properly and consider what to do if it fails (e.g. in a power cut).
- It is important to keep clean any tanks (e.g. header tanks) that hold filtered water that feeds your taps.

Filters and UV lights

- Check your filtration and sterilisation equipment regularly, particularly if your water tastes, looks, or smells different to normal. Maintenance will normally involve cleaning or replacing the appropriate filters or UV light.

Testing

- It is important to regularly test the water coming out of your tap. Experts recommend testing at least twice a year (e.g. in winter and summer). To help with this, your Council Environmental Health Officers (EHO) have a duty to collect and analyse a sample from your supply if you request one, for a fee.
- Tests check for contamination from bugs (bacteria etc.), metals, chemicals, along with pH levels, cloudiness and colour. If your water fails against any of these, remedial action must be taken prior to re-testing.

Costs

- PWS maintenance, improvements, and testing all involve some cost. It is good practice to consider putting some money aside every month towards this.

Emergency bottled water:

- You are responsible for your emergency water provision. However, in some cases (e.g. due to drought or frost) Scottish Water may supply bottled water at Council locations. Contact your EHO for advice.

Repairs, maintenance, upgrades :

- In cases when you cannot do the maintenance yourself, contact local tradespeople. It is important to use technical providers who are experienced with PWS.
- Neighbours on a PWS may be able to share advice based on their experience.

Further information:

- **The Scottish Government website has official information on PWS with useful up-to-date resources** <https://www.mygov.scot/private-water-supplies>
- The Scottish Rural Association is developing a website dedicated to all things PWS <https://www.ruralwater.scot>

What is a Private Water Supply? A guide for users

In Scotland, particularly in rural areas, there are properties where potable water comes from a Private Water Supply (PWS) rather than the public water mains. **It is the owner/user's responsibility to understand their PWS, and any risks to it, and to ensure that their water is safe to drink.**

A PWS system will incorporate several different components from source to tap that require appropriate management and regular maintenance. There are a diversity of types of PWS and almost every system is different. For this reason, it is very important that users get to know in detail how their PWS is arranged.

This leaflet summarises PWS basics and signposts where to find further information and specific guidance.

Note that in addition, there are special rules for PWS that provide water to a business or rental property (including holiday lets) or supply more than 50 people or more than 10m³ of water a day. These PWS are obliged to:

- register the supply with the Council
- have the council test the supply at least once a year (fee applies)
- have the Council risk assess the supply at least once every 5 years (fee might apply)
- let any user (e.g. tenant, customers) know that water comes from a private supply



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More information and materials at <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/PWS>

Understanding your Private Water Supply (PWS)

WATER TANK

If your PWS has a header tank (after the filters) that feeds the taps it is **important to keep this clean**. Checking for household leaks is also a good idea.

WATER PIPES

Map the route of the pipes to your property - they may run across others' land. Even buried pipes can be damaged by heavy machinery.

ABSTRACTION POINT

Find out where your water is taken from. It might be on someone else's land, and might not appear in your property's deeds.

WATER SOURCES (SEE BELOW LEFT TOO)

Some PWS are supplied from surface water (e.g. burns, lochs). The quantity and quality of this water can be affected by the surrounding land use. **It is important that the source is protected from pollution and potential disturbance.**

SHARED PWS

The water source may serve more than one household and some elements of your PWS might be shared. It is important that you know if that is the case, and agree on any shared maintenance responsibilities.

TYPES OF PRIVATE WATER SUPPLY


Your water may come from groundwater (well or borehole) or reservoir. Depending on its location your PWS may be gravity fed, but usually includes a pump somewhere in the system to maintain pressure to your house.

FILTRATION & STERILISATION

Your PWS will likely include equipment to ensure that your water is clean. These might include a particulate filter, a UV lamp to kill bacteria, a pH corrector, and others depending on need. These are often **located in or near to the property, and require regular checking and maintenance.**

WATER QUALITY

Even if your water tastes OK it can still cause risks to your health, so **testing regularly is important**. Ensuring that your water is safe to drink and **meets water quality standards is your responsibility.**



Things like drought, floods, and changes to drainage or land management can result in changes in the quality or quantity of the water available. Consider having a risk-assessment carried out by your Council.

It is useful to understand when your supply might be at risk of running low and have plans in place to address this (e.g. water storage tanks).

Power cuts might prevent your system from working (e.g. pumps won't work and you won't have water in your taps). You might consider a back-up generator if this is a frequent issue.

