

COWETA COUNTY, GEORGIA'S WELL ORDINANCE: A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO PROTECT THE DRINKING WATER AND HEALTH OF WELL OWNERS

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Abstract. In Coweta County, Environmental Health officials noticed that construction of some bored wells lacked grouting procedures that met Georgia's Water Well Standards Act. To remedy this, a county ordinance was instituted to ensure the proper protection of water wells. The County Commissioners approved the ordinance and the Environmental Health Department began requiring all well drillers to have a health official present during the grouting of new wells. The ordinance provides for oversight of the construction of all water wells to help assure cleaner drinking water, and to protect the health of residents and the quality of groundwater.

INTRODUCTION

In health-related issues, it seems that new regulations are usually brought about as a reaction to someone disregarding the rules. It was for this reason that Coweta County, in 1994, adopted Georgia's Water Wells Standard Act as a County Regulation. A brief history is presented.

SITUATION

A gentleman became severely ill and was diagnosed with a parasite that he contracted from his well water. Upon examination of his bored well it was determined that the well had not been properly grouted. Streaking along the concrete casing indicated that surface water was able to enter the well at casing joints. In the same subdivision there were several wells that were contaminated with coliform bacteria. Contamination would be cleared by chlorination, then a rain event would cause contamination again. Inspection showed that these wells were not grouted.

There were also problems with wells being located too close to septic tanks and drainfields, and too close to

homes. At that time, 1993, the Environmental Health Department did not permit wells, but would make a notation on the septic permit indicating where the well should be located. Often, neither the builder nor the well driller paid attention to this, and there were several problems with drainfield locations. Often times the well would be drilled after the septic system was installed and be sited without regard to the septic system.

SOLUTION

To keep these problems from occurring, it was necessary to permit wells and inspect well grouting. At the 1993 Board of Health meeting, Coweta's Lead Environmentalist discussed these problems and asked the Board to consider adopting well regulations and permit fees. The Board recommended that contact the County Attorney and discuss the feasibility.

At the September, 1993, Board of Health meeting, a motion to adopt regulations for water wells was passed unanimously. To facilitate this, Coweta County adopted Georgia's Water Wells Standards Act. This gave us the authority to require a permit be issued before the drilling or boring of a new well, and authority to inspect the grouting. A fee of \$50.00 was imposed,

We have two "call in" times for contractors to let us know when and where a grouting will take place, and an inspector will be there to watch. Bentonite or cement grout may be used for drilled wells, but only cement for a bored well. The well must be grouted for a minimum of 10' from the surface. The driller must have the permit on site; the permit states the location of the well. We permit the well in the location that the homeowner or well driller has selected if it does not conflict with the drainfield location.

