

KENTUCKY WELL DRILLERS QUARTERLY

Volume 28, No 3
August, 2025

SETBACK REQUIREMENTS: WATER WELLS

Authored by: Kurtis Spears

Groundwater is a both critically important and widely utilized resource in the state of Kentucky for drinking, agricultural, and commercial use. While millions of Kentuckians have access to public water providers, there are many in the state that do not. For those residents without access, a domestic water well is often the most viable option available. To ensure protection of these valuable groundwater resources the Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW) has regulations in place that set forth proper standards, techniques and requirements regarding the construction of water wells. One particularly important set of requirements are setback distances.

What are Setback Distances?

A setback distance, in relation to domestic water wells, is the minimum distance a well can be constructed in relation to a potential pollution source. 401 KAR 6:310 Section 5 lists potential pollution sources and their associated setback distances. This includes sources such as leaching pits, petroleum tanks, septic tanks, closed loop geothermal wells, manure piles, graves/cemeteries, surface water bodies, etc. Setback distances for the listed sources range from 100 ft. (leaching pits, and petroleum tanks) to 10ft. (property lines, utility lines, and roadway right of way).

Can Setback Distances Change?

In some cases, setback distances can vary depending on the aquifer medium and thickness. 401 KAR 6:310 Section 5 (3) states "If the unconsolidated material is less than twenty (20) feet thick and composed of predominantly sand or gravel, the minimum lateral distance established in subsection (1) of this section shall be doubled.". Unconsolidated sand and gravel can be susceptible to contamination due their respective porosities; therefore, an increased lateral distance is needed to address the vulnerability of the medium.

Who Is Responsible for Implementing Them?

It is the responsibility of the certified water driller that is constructing the well to ensure that all setback distances are satisfied. 401 KAR 6:310 Section 5 (2) states "The certified water supply well driller shall evaluate land-use both on which well is to be located and on adjacent properties and identify other pollution sources not listed in subsection (1) of this section.".

Want to Learn More?

You can find more information on setback distances and water well construction requirements at <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov> or at <https://eec.ky.gov>.



SUPPORTING KENTUCKY'S DRILLING PROFESSIONALS: HOW THE CABINET IS HERE TO HELP

Authored By: Tim Collins

At the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, we understand that navigating the requirements for driller certifications can sometimes feel complex. Whether you're a new applicant, a seasoned driller preparing for recertification, or just seeking guidance on program compliance, our team is here to assist you every step of the way.

Application Assistance

Applying for driller certification or license renewal involves gathering documentation, meeting eligibility criteria, and completing required forms. Our staff is available to help you understand the process and avoid delays caused by incomplete or incorrect submissions. If you need one-on-one guidance, don't hesitate to reach out — we're happy to walk you through each section of the application.

Exam Preparation Support

For those preparing to take the Kentucky Driller Certification State Exam(s), we offer study guides and reference materials tailored to the most current rules and technical requirements. These resources are designed to help you understand key concepts, regulatory expectations, and field practices. Our goal is to ensure that every qualified driller has the tools they need to pass the exam(s) with confidence.

On-Site and Regional Support

Recognizing that many drillers operate in rural or remote areas of the state, our team is willing to travel when necessary to provide in-person support. Whether it's a group training, initial certification, recertification, or individual guidance, we're committed to meeting you where you are. This includes working directly with drilling companies or contractors who need on-site assistance with compliance, application components, or understanding program requirements.

How to Reach Us

If you have questions or need support, contact Tim Collins at Tim.Collins@Ky.gov, (502) 782- 4206 (office), or (502) 229-3793 (mobile). We encourage all drillers to reach out early and often. Our team is here to make the process easier and ensure you stay on track with Kentucky's standards for safe, responsible drilling. The success of Kentucky's water well and monitoring well programs depends on knowledgeable and qualified professionals like you. We're proud to support your work and are always ready to lend a hand.

DID YOU KNOW?

-The [Kentucky Geological Survey](#) has a wealth of information with over 40 years of well log data that includes geology, quantity, and depths.

-Depths on water wells can range from tens of feet to hundreds of feet depending on where you are in the state.

-Well data that you submit can help identify contamination trends, productive aquifers, and guide land use planning for other industries within Kentucky.

-Monitoring wells are used in all different types of locations to make sure that contaminants don't migrate to other locations throughout the state.



EMAILS AND QUICK LINKS

Emails of Groundwater Staff:

adam.smith@ky.gov

kurtis.spears@ky.gov

tim.collins@ky.gov

bronson.mcqueen@ky.gov

zachary.campbell@ky.gov

megan.sidaway@ky.gov

Quick Links

Water Well Drillers Certification:

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/401/006/320/>

Monitoring Well Construction:

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/401/006/350/>

Well Owner's Guide:

<https://eec.ky.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water/Reports/Reports/2009-WaterWellOwnersGuide.pdf>

Water Supply Well Construction:

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/401/006/310/>

Well Driller Certification Program:

<https://eec.ky.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water/GW/Pages/GWDrillers.aspx>

Well Record Information Map:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/cdacd3e110aa4ba188283c586513b303>