

## Eastgate Environmental Health Services

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**Public Health – Seattle & King County Environmental Health Division (PHSKC)**  
**Group B Water Systems – Replacement Wells**  
**Memorandum**

**Effective Date: 1/29/2026**

**From: Derek Pell**

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**Subject: Group B Water Systems – Replacement Wells**

**Developed by: Wesley Loven, Health and Environmental Investigator, Public Health – Seattle & King County**

### 1. Summary and Purpose

This memo provides guidance on Public Health's limited regulatory role concerning Group B Water Supply System issues outside the scope of an active On-site Sewage System design application under review. E.g. replacement wells, well site inspections, O&M issues.

### 2. Regulatory Background

Per [King County Board of Health On-site Sewage Title 13](#), section 13.04.070(A), “No on-site sewage system may be constructed or expanded if the plumbing fixtures draining to the system are not supplied with water from an approved source.

An “approved source” consists of one of the following:

- A public water source currently in compliance with chapter [246-290 WAC](#) (Group A public water systems) or [246-291 WAC](#) (Group B public water systems) and [King County Board of Health Title 12 - Water](#).”
- A private individual well source.
- An alternative water source, when there is demonstrated proof of Hardship.

#### Group B drinking water systems.

- Group B drinking water systems serve fewer than 15 service connections and fewer than 25 people per day – See 246-291 WAC for a detailed definition.
- Group B drinking water systems are regulated by DOH under Chapter 246-291 WAC.
- King County Board of Health Title 12.04.030 gives authority to PHSKC to regulate Group B drinking water systems through a Water System Plan of Operation.
- In 2011 the King County Water System Plan of Operation with DOH expired and a new plan was not signed. **PHSKC is no longer able to review and approve new Group B water system designs.**

- In 2014 DOH wrote and the State Board of Health adopted amendments to Chapter 246-291 WAC which ended ongoing compliance monitoring requirements for Group B water systems. In effect, Group B oversight was diminished to a one-time design approval.
- PHSKC does not have an independent funding mechanism for a Group B Drinking Water Program. PHSKC is no longer able to do a detailed assessment of existing water systems as described in 12.08.110.

### 3. Guidance

When issues with existing Group B drinking water systems arise that are outside the scope of OSS permit applications, PHSKC may provide technical assistance directing inquiries to water industry professionals and DOH publications. Technical assistance is intended to direct Group B water system owners to take action to ensure the water system operates consistently with a previously approved design.

#### PHSKC no longer requires an application to replace Group B water sources:

- The PHSKC OSS Program will no longer require or accept and approve replacement Group B well applications.
- Group B Water system purveyors and subscribers needing to replace their Group B well(s) are advised to:
  - Work with a professional engineer specializing in water systems to ensure that the replacement Group B well does not significantly alter the water system design needs, and if it does, go through the requisite process in accordance with Chapter 246-291 WAC new Group B design approval standards.
  - Work with a professional engineer specializing in water systems to obtain groundwater source approval from the Washington State Department of Health Office of Drinking Water to obtain groundwater source approval as needed.
  - Request a Well Site Inspection from PHSKC (Optional).
  - Hire a licensed well driller to get a start card from the Washington State Department of Ecology.
  - Drill a replacement well, working with professionals as necessary to ensure the well meets minimum setback standards outlined in King County Board of Health Title 12, and minimum water quality, quantity, and wellhead protection standards outlined in Chapter 246-291 WAC.
  - Ensure covenants, easements, and water user's agreements are updated as needed per the replacement well.
  - Ensure the replacement Group B well is used in a way that is consistent with the Group B water system's Water Rights Certificate or is consistent with permit exempt groundwater withdrawal.
  - Per WAC 173-160-381, "Any wells which are unusable, abandoned, or whose use has been permanently discontinued, or which is in such disrepair that its

continued use is impractical or is an environmental, safety or public health hazard shall be decommissioned...”

King County will not review arsenic treatment requests for existing or replacement Group B well sources:

- Existing and replacement Group B well sources in which the raw source water exceeds the current EPA established arsenic MCL of 10 parts per billion (0.010 mg/L) are advised to hire a professional engineer specializing in drinking water treatment to follow the guidelines in the DOH Water System Design Manual, [DOH Pub 331-123](#), and follow the public notification requirements in Chapter 246-291-360 WAC (3) and (4).

King County will continue to offer public water well Source Site Inspections:

- Group A and Group B Well Source Site Inspections performed by Program staff will result in the creation of a well source site inspection report form which may be used during the Washington State Department of Health’s Groundwater Source Approval process. Group A and B well public well source site reviews are a service provided by the OSS Program for a fee defined by the Program’s most recent fee schedule.

## Summary of Concerns Heard from Public Health Seattle & King County Staff

Given the proposed policy to discontinue OSS Program accepting Group B replacement water source applications for review, Program staff have raised the following concerns and received the following responses from management:

Concern	Response
If a replacement well is drilled for a Group B water system without PHSKC OSS Record of site approval, septic systems risk being approved within the sanitary control area (SCA) of a Group B water source on an adjacent parcel.	Any potable well should have a recorded restricted covenant securing the sanitary control area (SCA) especially when the SCA extends onto a neighboring property. Absent a restrictive covenant, any disagreement over the placement of the well and its SCA is presumptively a civil issue between adjoining parcel owners. Due to potentially unique facts and circumstances, these will need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
When a Group B well source is replaced, there will be no checking if the water quality is satisfactory.	We rely on the initial water system design approval. On-going water quality monitoring is recommended (refer to DOH guidance documents). Purveyors and/or homeowners are encouraged to test their system's water quality regularly.
When a Group B well source is replaced, there will be no checking that the amount of water being produced will meet the minimum demand of septic system development.	We rely on the initial water system design which included a yield test to predict the reliability of well capacity. Replacing wells to restore initial operating conditions is allowed. For replacement wells, we recommend a <b>well source site review</b> to further advise water system owners which is a service the OSS Program offers for a fee.