

# DOING BUSINESS IN A WELLHEAD PROTECTION AREA



## Thurston County Business Pollution Prevention Program

☎ 360-867-2664

👂 TDD: 360-867-2603

Small changes  
make a **BIG** difference!

## Help Keep Our Drinking Water Clean

Groundwater is Thurston County's main source of drinking water in both private and public wells or wells operated by public water utilities. To protect and ensure safe drinking water for the future, "wellhead protection areas" were mapped surrounding public wells that are replenished through rainfall. These areas indicate how long it takes for rainwater to infiltrate the ground, enter the aquifer, and arrive at the well. Areas were estimated at 1-year, 5-year, and 10-year intervals. Within these wellhead protection areas, groundwater is especially vulnerable to contamination for three reasons:

- 💧 Our soils are permeable; pollutants can easily flow through our soils to contaminate local aquifers.
- 💧 Our groundwater moves rapidly. Which can result in pollutants reaching an aquifer in relatively little time.
- 💧 Our public drinking water wells are shallow, usually around 200 feet or less. Most private wells are often only 50 feet deep.

## Proactive Pollution Prevention Assistance

Within these identified wellhead protection areas, Thurston County identifies businesses that handle or dispose of hazardous materials to provide free technical assistance. This non-regulatory focus allows for businesses to interact with the County to review protocols and practices in relation to local regulations and some state regulations. Recommendations will be left with businesses in hope to reduce the risk of spills, avoid improper disposal, limit liability, and properly recycle when practical.

## Risks

Hazardous materials such as solvents, fuels, cleaners, pesticides, and fertilizers, are all potential threats to groundwater if handled carelessly or stored improperly. Leaking underground fuel storage tanks and failing septic systems are also sources of contamination. Groundwater contamination has taken place in Thurston County before, and cleanup is very expensive and lengthy.

## Prevention

Learning how to manage hazardous waste properly can save money, protect the health of your employees, and protect our community's drinking water supply.

- 💧 **Know how to properly dispose and handle hazardous materials prior to purchase or generation.** Don't be blindsided by waste costs. Take time to estimate what and how much waste you will be producing and come up with an appropriate plan of how to handle and dispose of the waste before purchasing or generating it.
- 💧 **Develop a spill prevention and response plan for your business.** A spill plan prepares you and your employees to deal with small spills and leaks during business operations and provides a strategy for catastrophic, unexpected spills. A basic spill plan includes: Description of business activities, with site map and list of hazardous materials. List of spill control supplies on site. Also, emergency response procedures and training requirements of employees.
- 💧 **Keep all hazardous materials in secondary containment.** Secondary containment is a liquid-tight barrier or container that prevents a hazardous material that spills or leaks from contaminating surface water or soil. Container does not have to be expensive. It must be large enough to contain the spill completely.
- 💧 **Reduce the amount of hazardous materials you store and use.** Use less-toxic products which are less likely to contaminate groundwater if a spill or leak occurs. Consult your vendor, trade association, or other business in your industry about less-toxic products that are also effective.

For more information, including how to set up a free on-site technical assistance visit:

- 💧 Call the Thurston County Hazardous Waste Hotline at 360-867-2664 / TDD 360-867-2603
- 💧 Email [PHSSPollutionPrevention@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:PHSSPollutionPrevention@co.thurston.wa.us)
- 💧 Visit our website at [www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html)

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