

DRINKING WATER: Ours to Protect



FACT
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Source Water Protection is a provincial program to protect our municipal drinking water sources (water found in lakes, rivers and underground) from contamination and overuse.



Our drinking water is already safe

Our municipal drinking water is already safe and reliable. It goes through a rigorous treatment process with numerous measures in place to ensure its safety. But what about the water that comes into the treatment plant? This “source” of municipal water needs to be protected as well. That’s what the Source Water Protection Program is all about. It’s about safeguarding the water that comes into those treatment plants. That’s the water we get from underground supplies called aquifers, and surface water in lakes and rivers.

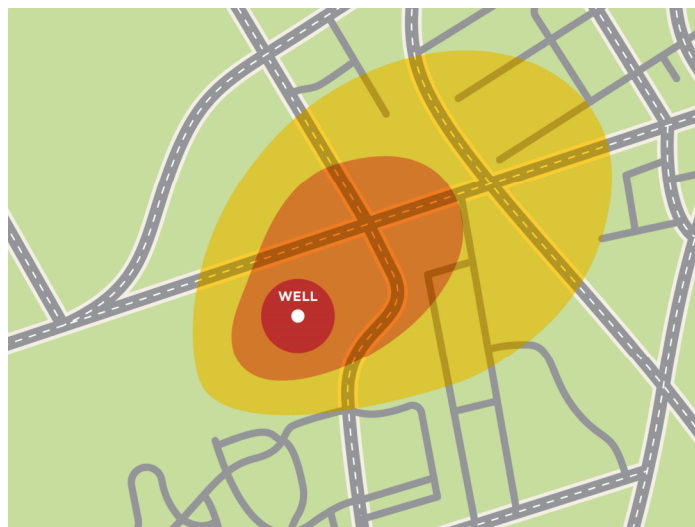


Source Water Protection is based on science

When the Source Water Protection Program began in 2007, a lot of research and technical studies went into mapping out the areas around municipal wells and surface water intakes. Maps for every well and intake have been created that show the vulnerable areas that we need to pay special attention to as contamination and overuse in those areas can have negative impacts.

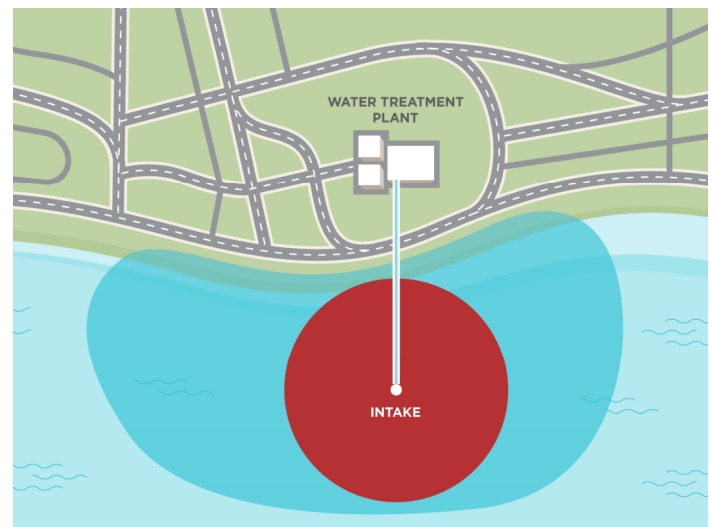
Wellhead Protection Areas

Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPAs) are areas around municipal wells where the groundwater is travelling toward that well when the well is being pumped. These areas need to be protected from certain activities to ensure they don’t pose a risk to the well. In general, the closer you are to a wellhead, the greater the threat of contamination.



Intake Protection Zones

Intake Protection Zones (IPZs) are areas around the end of the surface water intakes that bring water from lakes and rivers into treatment plants. Keeping contaminants away from intakes means that the water travelling to the municipal treatment plant is the highest quality possible before it is treated and gets to your tap.





Drinking water threats

The legislation (*Clean Water Act*) says that municipal drinking water sources must be protected against 21 threats, which can be roughly categorized as:

- municipal: waste, wastewater, sewage, stormwater, road salt
- agricultural: biosolids, manure, commercial fertilizer, pesticides, livestock grazing
- commercial: fuel, organic solvents, dense non-aqueous phase liquids (DNAPLs)*
- residential: operation of septic system and fuel storage
- water taking (activities that take large quantities of water from the ground)

*DNAPLs, or dense non-aqueous phase liquids, are a particularly hazardous group of substances that have a chemical structure that renders them practically impossible to remove once they contaminate a water source.



How does this impact me?

Source Water Protection primarily impacts people who live or own property or a business in vulnerable areas near municipal sources of drinking water. If you live or work in a vulnerable area, you have a special responsibility to be aware of your actions and how they can negatively impact our drinking water supplies – a responsibility we hope you take seriously.



Am I in a vulnerable area?

You can find out if you live or own property in a vulnerable area by contacting your local Risk Management Official (RMO). They are often municipal staff members with specialized training and qualifications who work with landowners to ensure their activities do not pose a threat to our drinking water supplies. Risk Management Officials may also work for your local Source Protection Authority. All of them possess documents that certify their status and training. You can ask to see their credentials anytime.

If you are in a vulnerable area and you plan on making changes to your property's use, you may be required to speak with a Risk Management Official. Certain activities may be prohibited or restricted or subject to a Risk Management Plan. This is a legally-binding agreement between a landowner, tenant or business and a Risk Management Official. The plan documents what measures are already in place and what needs to be added so that activities on the land are no longer a risk to the water supply.



Private wells are your responsibility

The measures put in place to protect municipal drinking water supplies do not include private drinking water wells. As a private well owner, you still need to be regularly testing your water and you need to make sure you're maintaining your well. If you have any health concerns about your well water, contact your local district health unit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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Lake Erie Source Protection Region
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