



News Digest

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EXTERIOR BUILDING CLEANUP MOVES AHEAD IN LOWER MANHATTAN

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that the Exterior Building Cleanup Program in Lower Manhattan has met with considerable early success. Begun on June 7th, with significant support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), this effort has shown mostly minimal presence of asbestos and other contaminants from World Trade Center debris on the roofs and exteriors of buildings in the downtown area.

The Exterior Building Cleanup Program is part of a federal, state and local government effort to reassure the public that air quality in lower Manhattan is, and will continue to be, safe for residents, workers and visitors. Commissioner Ward said, "By instituting progressive initiatives such as the Exterior Building Cleanup Program, we are working to promote public confidence and help foster the resurgence of Lower Manhattan as a residential and business community. Throughout the clean-up process, we have been able to proceed with the unwavering support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

The Exterior Building Cleanup Program is entirely funded by a \$10.1 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, through the FEMA/State of New York Public Assistance Program. President Bush authorized FEMA to pay the full cost of the clean-up program following the declaration of disaster in Lower Manhattan after September 11th. FEMA is also funding the EPA's interior cleanup of residential apartments in Lower Manhattan.

"Our aim is a safe and secure environment in lower Manhattan for the millions of residents, workers and visitors who spend time there," said FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh. "Supporting the city's efforts to reduce and eliminate any possible harmful effects caused by the continued presence of this material is FEMA's goal."

Yesterday82%
Estimated normal...92%

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Exterior Building Cleanup

Under the Exterior Building Cleanup Program, building owners whose properties have been identified as having World Trade Center debris are eligible to have the debris removed by licensed asbestos contractors at no cost. To date, more than 1,000 buildings in the downtown area have been inspected by DEP specialists. Three quarters of the buildings inspected have shown no evidence of debris. Of those upon which debris has been identified, 81 buildings have been cleaned to date, and an additional 56 buildings are either in the process of being cleaned or have been scheduled for future cleanup. Apart from the DEP-FEMA program, 60 buildings have been cleaned independently by building owners. A small number of buildings south of Canal Street remain to be scheduled for cleanup.

People interested in more information about the Exterior Building Clean-up Program may contact DEP at (718) DEP-HELP. This program is separate from the indoors residential clean-up program administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). For information on the indoor program, interested parties may call the EPA's hotline at 1-877-796-5471.

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YOUR HOME

When Water Comes From a Well

By JAY ROMANO

FOR city dwellers and most suburban homeowners, it might come as a surprise that there are more than 15 million households across the country that rely on private wells for their drinking water. And that New York, with more than 800,000 private wells statewide, and as many as 100,000 on Long Island, places fourth nationwide.

But the familiar image of a well — a large hole dug into the earth and topped by a circular stone wall covered by a cute little peaked roof — is outdated. Modern wells, experts say, are “engineered structures” about the diameter of a paint can that are drilled rather than dug.

“Think of the earth as a big sponge,” said Kevin McCray, executive director of the National Ground Water Association, a trade group in Westerville, Ohio. “A well creates a way to get access to the parts of the sponge that store large amounts of water.”

“And drilling a well today takes advanced technology and some fairly expensive equipment,” he said.

Modern well drillers, he said, use either a “cable tool percussion drill” — which is a

weighted drill bit suspended from a cable that is repeatedly turned and dropped — or, more frequently, a hydraulic rotary hammer rig to bore down into the earth deeply enough to tap into an underground aquifer.

But how does a driller know where to drill?

“Our industry is heavily populated by second-, third- and even fourth-generation drillers,” Mr. McCray said. “They know where the water is from having sited a well on nearby properties or by looking over their well logs,” the detailed records documenting their wells.

Mr. McCray said that according to the 1990 census, the last census that asked about private wells, New York had 842,342 private wells — the fourth highest number in the nation. New Jersey and Connecticut had 314,862 and 289,880 respectively.

Len Assante, president of the National Ground Water Association and the owner of Plainfield Well Drilling in Martinsville, N.J., said that in many cases, a well driller will be required by law to drill a certain distance into bedrock and then install a “well casing” to at least that depth. (The casing — a four- or six-inch steel or plastic tube inserted into the hole bored by the driller — is designed to keep the sides of the well from falling into the hole and to reduce the possibility that surface water will seep into the well and contaminate it.)

In northern New Jersey, the law requires drillers to install at least 50 feet of well casing with at least 20 feet extending into bedrock, Mr. Assante said. Thus, if bedrock is found 50 feet below the surface, the driller has to install 70 feet of casing to get the bot-

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Tom Bloom

Wells for drinking water nowadays are narrow “engineered structures” drilled rather than dug.

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tom 20 feet into bedrock.

Once the casing has been installed, Mr. Assante said, it is "pressure grouted" to further protect against infiltration of surface water. "We run a pipe down to the bottom of the casing and pump in grout to fill the space around the casing from the bottom to the top," he said, adding that an average well in northern New Jersey is about 200 feet deep.

Richard deBruyn, general manager of Casola Well Drillers in Mastic, said that on Long Island, where the sandy soil is permeated with abundant water, wells average between 100 and 200 feet in depth and typically do not extend into bedrock.

"We use casing all the way and then install stainless-steel screens at the bottom," Mr. deBruyn said, adding that while there are as many as 40,000 private wells on Long Island for drinking water, an increasing number of homeowners are installing wells to water their lawns.

"The big thing now is irrigation wells," he said, referring to the relatively shallow wells — generally about 50 feet deep — that are used for watering lawns but which may not be used for drinking water.

"For drinking water we have to have at least 40 feet of water in the well," Mr. deBruyn said. So, for example, if the driller hits water at 60 feet, he has to continue drilling to at least 100 feet.

Janice Hawk-Baldwin, president of the Empire State Well Drillers Association and a co-owner of Hawk Drilling in Ballston Spa, N.Y., said that in order to determine when a drinking-water well is deep enough, a driller

will conduct periodic flow tests.

One test uses compressed air to blow out any water that has accumulated in the well. Once the well is empty, the driller times how long it takes to fill up again. "With a six-inch well, if the water comes up one foot in one minute, the well would be producing 1.47 gallons of water per minute," Ms. Hawk-Baldwin said.

A more precise test, she said, is performed after the driller believes he has drilled deeply enough to produce sufficient quantities of water. "We put a test pump down into the well and start pumping," she said, adding that, ideally, a well should produce at least five gallons of water per minute for four hours.

Once the well has been drilled deep enough to produce the appropriate flow rate, there are basically two ways to get the water out of the hole and into the plumbing: by installing a "jet pump" in the house or a submersible pump in the well.

With a jet pump, which is typically used in very shallow wells, Ms. Hawk-Baldwin said, water is basically sucked into the house. A submersible, used in deeper wells, pushes water through plastic piping that runs through the casing and into the house. "We encourage people to use submersibles," Ms. Hawk-Baldwin said, explaining that with such a system, the pump itself is lowered to the bottom of the well.

"The size of the pump will be determined by the depth of the well, the distance from the well to the house, and how many gallons per minute you want the pump to produce," she said. "So if you have a 200-foot well a short distance from the house, a one-half horsepower pump should provide about seven gallons per minute,

and that should be enough for an average household."

In most cases, Ms. Hawk-Baldwin said, well water is pumped into an indoor pressure tank that has an expandable bladder that keeps the water under about 50 pounds of pressure, thereby providing a constant pressure at fixtures. A 200-foot well, she said, with the required pumping and pressure-tank equipment, would cost as much as \$5,500.

James Grossman, a Rochester real estate lawyer, said that anyone buying a house with an existing well should have the well tested. "You absolutely have to test for potability and flow," Mr. Grossman said.

Potability, he said, refers to whether the water is fit to drink. Most states, he said, have established standards for potability and most home inspection companies will have water samples tested by a certified testing lab to ensure that the water meets those standards.

Flow, he said, is the amount of water that the well will produce. And while seven gallons per minute would be acceptable for an average household, buyers with larger-than-average households — or big lawns and lots of cars — might want a better flow rate.

"You want to get a written representation from the seller in the contract that the well is adequate in size and volume for its intended use and that it will be so at closing," Mr. Grossman said.

Additional information about water wells is available on the Environmental Protection Agency's Internet site at www.epa.gov/safewater/pwells1.html. The site of the National Ground Water Association is www.wellowner.org.