



Buyer How To : Wells and Septic Systems

If you're building in a rural or remote setting, most likely you'll need to build a private water and waste system.

- **Septic Systems.** Your building site should have had a successful soils analysis or "perk" (or percolation) test completed prior to purchase. This test involves digging a test pit to a certain diameter and depth, pouring in a volume of water then timing how long it takes for the water to drain away. A perk test needs to be conducted by a certified professional and submitted to the permitting agency. Getting your perk tests done as early in the process as possible is important, because often septic placement can affect where the home can be located.
- **Capacity.** Your septic system will be designed to process the estimated amount of waste produced. In most areas, this is based on the number of bedrooms—theoretically the number of occupants— and whether a garbage disposal will be installed.
- **Transmission.** In many cases the septic field is located so that gravity will drain the waste into the field. If this is not the case, a septic pump will be necessary. Ensure that the pump includes an alarm and is properly electrified to function.
- **Location.** Your well and septic system should be located at least 100 feet apart; more distance may be required in some areas.
- **Well drilling.** You may be able to get a feel for the depth needed to locate water on your property by speaking with adjacent homeowners, though this is never a guarantee. Most wells fall within the 800 foot range. You'll want to have the water tested soon after drilling to determine whether it is safe or requires any additional treatment for drinkability. Your well drilling professional will install an electric pump to bring the water to the surface. If the location is remote with frequent power outages, you may want to consider installing a hand pump to access your water when the power is out.