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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
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POTABLE WATER AVAILABILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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This document provides guidelines to obtain Department of Public Health approval for potable water sources that are proposed to serve new residential and commercial development. The guidelines are based on the requirements of the Los Angeles County Plumbing Code, the Los Angeles County Health and Safety Code, and the California Code of Regulations, Title 22.

WATER AVAILABILITY REQUIREMENTS

POTABLE WATER

The Los Angeles County Plumbing Code, Section 218.0 defines potable water as:

"Water which is satisfactory for drinking, culinary, and domestic purposes and meets the requirements of the Health Authority having jurisdiction."

Environmental Health requires that all new residential or commercial developments be provided with an adequate, sustainable supply of potable water from a public water system or a private on-site well. Public water systems provide potable water to 5 or more service connections. The public water systems are under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Health Services. Private on-site water wells may supply 1 to 4 service connections. Private water wells are under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division.

SUSTAINABLE WATER

Environmental Health, as the Health Authority having jurisdiction, has determined an adequate, sustained yield for an private on-site water well to be a continuous flow of potable water at 3 gallons per minute for at least 24 hours based on the State's requirements for a "state small water system." The State Department of Health Services has determined, in the California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Section 64215, that a well will be considered an adequate source of sustainable water for a "state small water system" if it is demonstrated that it can supply a minimum of 3 gallons per minute for at least 24 hours for each service connection served by the system. A "state small water system" is defined as having at least 5 but not more than 14 connections. The requirement established by the State Department of Health Services for "state small water systems" is equally applicable to private water wells serving 1 to 4 service connections.

However, a well providing 2 gallons per minute for at least 24 hours will be acceptable, provided that a minimum 1,500 gallon storage tank is installed to each closed well water distribution system. The minimum 1,500 gallon capacity is in addition to Fire Department requirements for stored water. The water yield of a private on-site well shall be determined using the protocol specified in the October 17, 2005 document, "Well Yield Test Procedures, Private Wells."

MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING, PERMITTED DWELLINGS REQUIRING BUILDING PERMIT

Proposed modifications to an existing, permitted dwelling, for which a building permit authorization from Environmental Health is necessary, requires a water availability approval as stated in the Los Angeles County Code Title 11, Section 11.38.165C. The Director shall issue a water availability approval for the dwelling after receiving a "will serve" letter from a qualified public water provider or assurance of a permitted, private, on-site water well. Documentation of an approved private on-site well consists of a Public Health Permit, current well yield test and laboratory analysis for water quality in compliance with Safe Drinking Water Standards. Well yield test results are valid for 3 years from the date of approval.

Water availability approval does not apply to any improvement of a structure necessary to assure safe living conditions as identified by the Building Authority or Environmental Health Officer. Water availability approval also does not apply to any modification of a "historic structure", provided that the designation will not be disqualified by the modification.

“When the well yield test has been completed to the satisfaction of the Director and documentation of laboratory analysis showing that the water quality meets the primary Bacteriological and Chemical requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Standards, is provided to the department, a water availability approval shall be issued by the Director for the purpose of obtaining a building permit.” (LA County Code, Section 11.38.165)

“No well water from a new or reconstructed well shall be used for domestic purposes Until the water meets such bacteriological and chemical requirements.” (LA County Code, Section 11.38.270)

EXEMPTIONS FOR EXISTING, PERMITTED DWELLINGS

Existing, permitted dwellings that are presently served by hauled water in an approved storage tank are exempt from complying with the potable and sustainable water requirements. Also exempt are existing, permitted dwellings that are currently served by a well with a water yield less than 2 gallons per minute. Finally, future projects that received a Building Plan Check Number for a complete building permit application, including private sewage disposal plans, are exempt if filed prior to January 1, 2003.

HAULED WATER

Based on guidance from the State Department of Health Services, Environmental Health has determined that hauled water cannot provide water which is satisfactory for drinking, culinary, and domestic purposes. Hauled water does not provide the comparable level of public health protection as a permitted public water system or an approved private on-site well. Therefore, **hauled water does not satisfy the requirements for potable water for new residential or commercial construction.**

Several factors were considered in the determination that hauled water does not satisfy the requirements for potable water. The County does not have jurisdiction over hauled water suppliers and the transient nature of the water source makes it difficult to adequately regulate. There is an increased risk of contamination of the water during transfer from the tanker trucks to the on-site storage facilities. On-site storage tanks have been demonstrated to be a source of microbiological contamination. Finally, hauled water suppliers may haul substances in their trucks other than potable water, thereby increasing the risk of contamination.

HAULED WATER EXCEPTION

In the event that drought causes an private on-site well to be unable to provide an adequate quantity of potable water to an existing residence, Environmental Health will allow the use of hauled water as a potable water source. However, the homeowner must demonstrate to Environmental Health that drilling a new well or deepening the existing well has not provided an adequate source of potable water. Environmental Health's policy in such cases would allow the homeowner to install an approved water storage tank and receive deliveries of potable water from a licensed hauled water supplier.

DRINKING WATER REQUIREMENTS

The Los Angeles County Code, Title 11, Section 11.38.165 requires that private wells supplying water for domestic use be tested for water quality. Specifically, water from private wells must be tested for Coliform bacteria and primary inorganic chemicals as defined in the California Code of Regulations, Title 22. As part of the permit application process, applicants, or their authorized consultants, are required to collect water samples from the private well for analysis. The water samples shall be sent to an ELAP Certified Laboratory. The samples shall be collected, maintained, and shipped as required by the laboratory. Currently, Environmental Health is collecting water samples from private wells to test only for primary inorganic chemicals. If the results from the applicant's laboratory and the County Agricultural Laboratory differ significantly, more testing may be required. In any case, the results from the County Agricultural Laboratory shall take precedence over other laboratory results. After the Water Quality analysis is completed and the water source is determined to meet Safe Drinking Water Standards, Environmental Health will issue to the applicant or authorized consultant, a Water Supply Approval letter.

SHARED WELLS

Private water wells may be shared with 2, 3, or 4 single family dwellings on adjoining lots. The shared well shall be yield tested using the protocol specified in the October 17, 2005 document, "Well Yield Test Procedures, Private Wells." A shared well shall be accepted for use after securing a "Water Supply Approval" document and a completed "Production Well Permit" from Environmental Health and consent from The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.

WATER SOURCE DOCUMENTATION FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

Environmental Health shall evaluate potable water source as part of the review for new construction. The following steps are necessary for a successful and rapid approval.

1. Prior to submission to Environmental Health, the applicant or authorized consultant shall submit construction plans to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Division of Building and Safety, or the City Building Authority to obtain a Plan Check Number and legal address for the project.
2. Submit a completed Service Request Application to Environmental Health with the correct fee. The date the plans were received at the Building Department and the Plan Check Number must be included on the application.
3. Provide one of the following applicable water source documents:

PUBLIC WATER SOURCE

- ◆ A "will serve" letter on water company letterhead shall be submitted for the project. The letter shall state that the project is being served by water that meets Safe Drinking Water Standards. The letter shall also contain the Public Water System Number assigned to it by the California State Department of Health Services.

ON-SITE WELL

- ◆ A current Water Supply Approval document and a completed Production Well Permit shall be submitted for the project. The well yield test results are valid for 3 years from the date of the test.

SHARED WELL

- ◆ A current Water Supply Approval document and a completed Production Well Permit shall be submitted for the project. The well yield test results are valid for 3 years from the date of the test.
- ◆ Provide documentation from the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning that the project has successfully completed the Director's Review.