The Board of Health enforces its [well regulations](http://shutesbury.org/sites/default/files/offices_committees/board_of_health/well_regs.pdf) and issues permits for the construction and destruction of drinking water wells.  If you are building a new house, the well must be installed and meet standards of quantity and quality before the Board of Health can sign off on your building permit application.

**I need a well.  What do I have to do?**

 The first thing to do is to download or request from the Board of Health the [Shutesbury well regs](http://shutesbury.org/sites/default/files/offices_committees/board_of_health/well_regs.pdf). There you will find guidelines for how a well is to be sited, testing parameters, yield requirements, and the [application form](http://shutesbury.org/sites/default/files/offices_committees/board_of_health/well_app.pdf).  The completed application should be submitted to the Board of Health with a $50 fee and a site plan showing the location of the proposed well.  If you are building a new house, the location of the proposed well should have been determined by your septic system designer and indicated on the septic system plot plan.

**I live on a small, non-conforming lot and can’t meet the setback requirements from the septic system, but my old shallow well is inadequate.  What can I do?**

 The Board of Health can grant variances to the setback requirement provided the proposed new well is at least 50 feet from any subsurface sewage disposal field.  When such variances are granted we urge homeowners to have their well tested annually for coliform bacteria and nitrate, which are indicators of potential septic system contamination.

**What happens to my old well when I have a new one installed?**

 An abandoned well is a danger to public safety and to the environment, and it should be properly destroyed.  Well destruction requires a permit from the Board of Health, using the same application form as well construction.   A licensed well driller can destroy an abandoned well by permanently filling it with an impermeable material.

**Can I have an irrigation well drilled?**

 Yes.  You must apply to the Board of Health, just as for a drinking water well.

**What about geothermal wells?**

 The permit for geothermal wells for heating is issued by the Department of Environmental Protection, but to make sure all local requirements are being met you should discuss your project with the Board of Health.

**How can I be sure my well water is safe to drink?**

When your well is first drilled, the water is tested by a certified laboratory and the results submitted to the Board of Health for review.  If the water fails on any of the parameters, it is retested; if it continues to fail, remediation measures such as filtering or disinfection will be considered.

 To be sure your well water continues to be safe, it is recommended that this full suite of tests be repeated every ten years.  In addition, it is also recommended that tests for coliform bacteria and nitrate be performed every year.

**The list of testing parameters in the Shutesbury well regulations doesn’t include any volatile organic compounds (VOCs).  Why not?**

Testing for VOCs is very expensive and is reserved for cases where such contamination is suspected, for example, in the case of the gasoline leak from the old fire station tanks.  Homeowners who have reason to believe that VOCs may have contaminated their wells should have their water tested.

 The Board of Health has some data from VOC tests that have been performed at various sites in Shutesbury.  These tests were performed as part of the septic system inspection that is required when a property changes hands.  For a number of years, when the distance from the well to a septic system was less than one hundred feet, a well water quality test, including VOCs, was required by DEP.  All of these tests in Shutesbury were negative.  DEP has since dropped this requirement.