

Groundwater Protection

What programs is the Nassau County Department of Health involved in that help to protect our groundwater resources?

The Department is involved in many programs to prevent subsurface discharges that have the potential to threaten our groundwater resources. They include the Underground Injection Control (UIC) program, the Sewer Connection program, the Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites program and the Toxic and Hazardous Material Storage program.

How do these programs work to insure protection of groundwater?

The UIC program primarily focuses on subsurface drainage structures such as floor drains, drywells, and on-site sanitary disposal systems at commercial facilities, which include dry cleaners, automotive repair facilities, and other industrial facilities that store and use toxic and/or hazardous materials. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region II Groundwater Compliance Section administers the program and the Department works directly with the USEPA to implement the program in Nassau County. The goal of the Sewer Connection program is to connect industrial and commercial facilities to the public sewers where available. Involved with the connection of these facilities to sewers is proper sampling and closure of existing on-site sanitary systems. This Department also works with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) during the investigation and remediation of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites in Nassau County. The Toxic and Hazardous Material Storage program helps assure that petroleum and chemical products are properly stored and that any accidental leakage is contained before it can contaminate soil or our groundwater resources.

What happens when ground water contamination is discovered?

This Department will refer situations where groundwater contamination is found to the appropriate regulatory agency, USEPA or NYSDEC. The facility operator or the property owners (Potentially Responsible Parties or PRP's) are then obligated to enter into legally binding agreements to investigate and clean up contamination. When the PRP's either refuse or are financially unable to perform these activities, the EPA or DEC may perform the work under the State or Federal Superfund Program. This Department, in cooperation with the New York State Department of Health, assists the USEPA and the NYSDEC by providing comments and recommendations regarding soil and groundwater investigations and remedial actions.

Is more information available?

You can visit the following website for more information on these matters:

US Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov/seahome/inject.html)