

Benefits of Connecting to Municipal Water

Frequently Asked Questions

This frequently asked questions (FAQ) document is provided for residents that have PFAS in their drinking water well, have been supplied a point-of-use filter, and are now being offered an opportunity to be connected to municipal water at low or no cost.

OVERVIEW

If PFAS has been detected in your private drinking water well, switching to municipal water is an excellent choice that could save you money in the long run and provide water that is safe to drink, cook, bathe, and clean with even during extreme situations like power outages. You currently have the unique opportunity for the State of Michigan to cover most, if not all, of the costs associated with connecting your home to municipal water. If you choose this option, the main cost you will need to worry about in the future is a monthly water bill.

FAQS

What if I want to stay on my own well system for drinking water?

If you choose not to connect your home to municipal water, the state will not continue to pay for services such as well testing, bottled water, and filters. In addition, if your existing well fails, your local health department may require additional protections to your well like double-casing, or they may not issue a replacement well permit at all because groundwater in your area is contaminated by PFAS. You will be responsible for all costs associated with connecting to the water main and abandoning your own well.

Can I use filters indefinitely with my well water?

If you choose to keep your well and continue filtering your water, please understand that as the owner of a private drinking water well, you will be responsible for monitoring for contaminants and replacing your filters as needed to protect your health. Filters provided by local health departments and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) typically only filter water at the point where they are installed (usually a kitchen sink). Additionally, filter use ends up costing more per gallon, on average, than municipal water. An average filter cartridge costs around 0.08 cents per gallon to use, whereas a gallon of water from the municipal water system costs, on average, about 0.007 cents.

What if I change my mind and want to connect later? Will the State of Michigan still pay?

The State of Michigan is only able to help cover the costs to connect your home to municipal water if you connect now. Depending on where you live and what municipality provides drinking water to your area, current (2023) prices suggest that it could cost roughly between \$4,000 and \$12,000 to connect to municipal water. If you connect in the future, you will be responsible for this entire cost.

What if I want to keep my well to water my garden, plants, and lawn?

Watering plants with contaminated groundwater spreads contamination around and can be taken up by the plants. Health officials recommend abandoning and plugging wells, and most EGLE grants and loans require proper well abandonment.

What happens to my old well?

Michigan's well code states: "A well that is abandoned when municipal water is installed shall be plugged." Abandoned wells left unplugged are a liability for you and could pose a safety hazard in the future. Most grants and loans will cover the \$1,000-\$2,500 it costs to properly plug a well.

Will having a contaminated well affect the value of my home?

A home with a contaminated private well may be harder to sell. In many areas, homeowners are required to disclose the knowledge of drinking water contamination at the property's point of sale, potentially turning away buyers. By accepting the State of Michigan's offer to help pay for the connection to municipal water, you will not have to worry about the burden of a contaminated water supply since the municipality is regularly sampling for PFAS, iron, metals, and other chemicals. This can have a favorable effect on the value of your home.

I'm worried about having to pay a monthly water bill. What will that cost?

The price of your water bill can vary depending on where you live, how many people live in your home, and your general habits. On average, a typical bill in Michigan is around \$30/month. The best source for learning about average water bills in your area is your local water supplier.

It is your personal decision to accept or decline the State of Michigan's offer to help pay for the connection of your home to the municipal water supply. When making this choice, please keep in mind that the State is offering this connection out of concern for the quality of your drinking water and the health of you and your family. Not only does a municipal water connection ensure the quality of your drinking water, but it can also eliminate the financial burden of maintaining a well.

Which option is the most inexpensive?

EGLE has provided the following general cost estimates for each scenario over a 30-year period

SCENARIO	MONTHLY COST	TOTAL 30-YEAR COST	INCLUDED BENEFITS/BURDENS
Cost Over 30 Years to Connect to Municipal Water Now	Monthly water bill of \$30/month* x 360 months	\$10,800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free connection including piping, meter, valves, property restoration, and depending on the specific funding available, properly abandoning your old well • No filter or sampling needed to protect against contaminants: municipality pays for compliance monitoring
Cost to Maintain Well Over 30 Years and Cost of Future Municipal Water Connection	Monthly average cost to operate a well system varies by usage	\$20,000-\$30,000 + cost to operate well system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon well failure, connecting to municipal water and properly plugging your old well: \$5,000-\$15,000 • Annual sampling for PFAS and MDHHS-recommended routine monitoring: ~\$500 x 30 years = \$15,000

All items above are estimates as of 6/2023.

*Average. Check with your local water supplier for estimated costs in your area.

For questions about your drinking water, contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) hotline at 800-648-6942 or your local health department.

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