North Carolina Well Contractors Certification

Frequently Asked Questions

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I. General Certification Questions

A. When did certification begin?

a. In 1997, the General Assembly passed laws designed to protect our groundwater resource and protect consumers from persons who may not be qualified to construct, install, repair, alter, or abandon wells. The Well Contractors Certification Commission was created, and adopted rules to implement a certification program. Certification of individual well contractors began January 2000.

B. What's the difference between "certification" and "registration"?

b. The registration program was established by the State legislature in 1972 as a way to keep track of those individuals in the business of well construction, repair, and abandonment. Any individual or company could become registered simply by filling out an information form and paying a fee.

The Certification Program, established by the legislature in 1997 replaced the registration program and is intended to ensure that well contractors meet minimum qualifications in terms of competence, ability and other criteria required by State laws. The Certification Program provides a way to screen out individuals who may not be qualified to perform well contractor activities.

C. I would like to have my company certified to do well drilling. How can this be done?

c. Unlike the previous ñRegistrationò program, the current ñCertificationò program only applies to individuals. There are no provisions for the certification of companies in the current law. Each business owner will need to determine how many employees will need to be certified at each level to comply with State rules (ñA certified well contractor must be present at all times when well contractor activities are being conducted.ò)

II. Certification Fees

A. What does it cost to become certified?

a. Depending on the level being sought, there is a $150-250 fee that is submitted with the Application for Certification. This fee covers the cost of a scheduled exam, and after passing the exam, covers the certification fee for the time left in that certification period.

B. Will I have to pay a fee for certification each year?

b. Yes, there is an annual renewal/certification fee of $100-200 depending on the level of certification held. The renewal deadline is June 30th of each year.

C. I own a well drilling company, and have several drillers. Am I expected to pay the certification fees for all of them?

c. Depending on the level there is an annual fee of $100-200 for each individual who desires to be certified. The Well Contractors Certification Commission places no obligation on companies to pay certification fees for individuals employed by that company.

D. I just became certified in February. Will I have to pay the annual/renewal fee in June?

d. Yes. The annual fee submitted with your application covered the time when your certification took effect up to the renewal deadline, June 30th. The fee is not pro-rated.

III. Certification by Examination

A. I am currently certified in another state. Do you offer reciprocity?

a. No, we currently do not have a reciprocity agreement in place with any other state. You will be required to pass the certification exam.

However, including information on other state well contractor licenses you hold with your application for certification in North Carolina can help in demonstrating you have met the experience requirement, which is the purpose of the application.

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B. I have many years of well drilling experience and I do not want to take an exam to become certified. Can I become certified by "grandfathering"?

b. ñGrandfatheringò is no longer an option, you must take the exam. (The law mandates that only those who had been registered with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources since July of 1992 and who submitted their application and fee by January 1, 1999, were eligible for certification without examination.) Currently all well contractors are required to pass a certification examination to become certified.

C. When are certification examinations offered?

c. A minimum of two scheduled examinations are offered each year. Staff may also offer additional ñout-of-cycleò exams. All examination dates are posted on our website on the ñGet Certifiedò page.

D. Where are certification examinations offered?

d. Exam dates as well as locations are posted on our website on the ñGet Certifiedò page..

E. Is there a way to take the exam at a time sooner than the one scheduled?

e. Possibly. Once an application is approved the applicant may request an ñout-of-cycleò examination. A (WCC-19) Exam Request Form must be completed and mailed with the required examination fee to the Commission office, then a date is scheduled with the applicant.

F. If I fail the exam, what then?

f. The applicant must pass the exam within 3 consecutive attempts or within a one year period of time after the application is submitted, whichever expires first, or a new application shall be required. Any applicant who has failed the examination after 3 consecutive attempts shall be required to obtain 8 continuing education units (CEU) prior to submitting another application for certification. Proof of CEU completion must be submitted with the application.

If this is not your forth exam attempt, and your application is less than a year old at the time of the next examination, you may choose to take another examination the next time it is offered. The applicant must complete the (WCC-7) Retake Exam Request Form and mail it to the Commission offices with the required examination fee(s). Applicants that have failed an exam may also request an exam review, free of charge, to review the questions missed prior to retaking the exam. More information on requesting an exam review, including exam review dates and the request form, is available online on the ñGet Certifiedò page.

G. How long will my application be held?

g. The applicant must pass the exam within 3 consecutive attempts or within a **one year** period of time after the application is submitted, whichever expires first, or a new application shall be required.

IV. Do I Need To Be Certified If…

A. I am a pump installer. Do I need to be certified as a well contractor?

a. Yes, to perform pump installer activities, you need a minimum of level D well contractor certification. However, any activity other than breaking the well seal or disinfection of the well (such as extending casing) will require level C or higher well contractor certification.

B. I am a licensed plumber. Do I need to be certified as a well contractor to do minor well or pump repairs?

b. Yes, even minor activities such as breaking the well seal to gain access to the well and well disinfection are well contractor activities and therefore certification is required.
However, there is a limited exemption available to break the well seal and disinfect for the purpose of installing or replacing a pump for licensed plumbers who obtain training in well seals & disinfection within 2 years prior to performing this work. (G.S. 87-98.4(b)(13))

C. I own a well drilling company, but never physically do the drilling myself. Do I have to be certified?

c. Not necessarily. You will need to be certified if you personally supervise or manage any well contractor activity. A certified well contractor must be on-site, personally supervising and/or performing any well contractor activity.

D. If my certified driller (or myself, if I operate my own rig) is unable to complete an already-started job, can someone else who works for me finish the job?

d. Yes, but only if that individual holds the appropriate level of well contractor certification for the equipment being used.

E. I own a drilling company and I have several drillers and helpers. Do they all have to be certified?

e. No, not necessarily. At least one certified well contractor, of the appropriate level, must be physically present to supervise or conduct any well contractor activities. Non-certified helpers may work with the certified individual. If multiple well contractor activities are being conducted on a site at one time, such as drilling several geothermal holes with multiple rigs, more certified individuals would need to be present to properly supervise all the activities. It is not possible to run a rig and supervise another rig at the same time; an additional certified contractor would be needed. Company owners must therefore decide how many of their employees will need to be certified in order to conduct business.

F. We are an environmental/engineering/geologic consulting company and we just put in monitor wells, recovery wells, geoprobe holes, piezometers, etc. Do we need to get certified?

f. Yes, you must be certified as a well contractor if you are in the business of geotechnical borings or constructing wells, regardless of the size or intended use of those wells.

G. I only drill wells that will not be used for drinking water purposes. Do I need to be certified?

g. Yes, you must be certified as a well contractor if you are in the business of constructing wells, regardless of whether those wells are for drinking water or some other purpose (such as irrigation, geothermal, monitoring wellsé).

H. I only plan to install wells on my own property. Do I need to be certified?

h. No, you do not have to be certified to install, repair, or abandon wells on your own property for your own personal use. However, wells you construct, repair, or abandon on your own property, <u>must</u> meet all State and local well construction standards.

I. I am an engineer, geologist, or licensed contractor. In the future, I would like to hire a certified well contractor to perform well contractor activities per my instructions. Do I also have to be certified as a well contractor?

i. Not necessarily. However, <u>you</u> <u>will</u> need to be certified if you personally supervise or manage <u>any</u> well contractor activity, regardless of whether that supervision or management is done on-site or from some remote location. If your instructions include on-site direction or control of the well contractor activity, or involve giving direction to the on-site direction or control of the well contractor activity, or involve giving direction to the on-site certified well contractor in conducting those activities, then you must also be certified as a well contractor.

J. I do not drill wells at all. I just perform minor well repair. Do I need to become certified?

j. Yes, any modification or alteration of a well is a well contractor activity and will require the presence of a certified well contractor of the appropriate level.

K. I only abandon wells. Do I need to become certified?

k. Yes, the abandonment of wells is defined by law as a well contractor activity for which level C or higher well contractor certification is required.

L. Is certification required to install temporary dewatering wells (vacuum wellpoints)?

l. Not necessarily. As per G.S.87-98.4 (b)(5&6), Certification is not required for construction, repair, or abandonment of a well used for a temporary dewatering activity that is associated with, and necessary to complete construction of, a utility distribution or collection system, a building or other structure, or a transportation system, if all of the following conditions are met:

a. The dewatering well is constructed solely for the purpose of removing water from or lowering the water table in the immediate area of the construction activity.

b. The dewatering well is located within 25 feet of the excavation and is not greater than 25 feet deeper than the excavation.

c. The dewatering well is abandoned in accordance with rules governing the abandonment of wells adopted by the Environmental Management Commission pursuant to G.S. 87-87 within 30 days of installation of the well or within 10 days of completion of the project, whichever is later.

Certification is also not required for construction, repair, or abandonment of a well used for a temporary dewatering activity that is associated with the construction of a borrow pit if the dewatering activity is located within 15 feet of the proposed perimeter of the borrow pit.

M. I am a federal employee. Do I require certification to perform well contractor activities in North Carolina?

m. Certification is not required for a person who is employed by a government agency and performs well contractor activities soley within the scope of the personôs government employment. However, this **does not apply** to private contractors hired by government agencies to perform the work.[G.S. 87-98.4 (b)(3)]

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N. Is it necessary to have certification to install Cathodic Protection Anodes?

n. No, it was determined that the installation of cathodic protection anodes is not a well contractor activity and therefore does not require certification.[G.S. 87-98.4 (b)(10)]

O. Is certification required for the installation of wetland monitoring gauges?

o. Not necessarily. Installing wetland monitoring gauges at depths of eight feet or less solely to monitor fluctuations in the water table does not require certification.[G.S. 87-98.4(b)(11)

P. What are some other exemptions from the certification requirement?

p. Certification is not required for:

- Drilling of a blast hole.
- Exploratory drilling for mining-related investigations.
- Installation of a water level observation well on property for which a mining permit has been issued under the Mining Act of 1971, Article 7 of Chapter 74 of the General Statutes.
- Installation of a wetland monitoring gauge at a depth of eight feet or less for the purpose of monitoring fluctuations in the water table.
- A person who is licensed as a professional engineer under Chapter 89C of the General Statutes, a geologist under Chapter 89E of the General Statutes, or a soil scientist under Chapter 89F of the General Statutes who uses a hand auger to collect soil or water samples or to measure water levels. This exemption does not include the construction of a monitoring well.
- Installation of a caisson, piling, or structural pier. [G.S. 87-98.4(b)]

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