

# wellcare<sup>®</sup> information for you about **When is a Well a Public Water System?**

---

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there are approximately 170,000 public water systems in the United States. The EPA defines public water systems as those that provide water for human consumption to at least 15 service connections, or an average of at least 25 people, for at least 60 days per year.

## **EPA Public Drinking Water Classifications**

The EPA classifies public water systems according to whether they serve the same people year-round or on an occasional basis. The three types of public water systems, as defined by the EPA include:

- ♦ A **Community Water System (CWS)** supplies water to the same population year-round.
- ♦ A **Non-Transient Non-Community Water System (NTNCWS)** regularly supplies water to at least 25 of the same people at least six months per year, but not year-round. Examples include schools, factories, office buildings, and hospitals that have their own water systems.
- ♦ A **Transient Non-Community Water System (TNCWS)** provides water in places where people do not remain for long periods of time, such as campgrounds or gas stations.

## **State Definitions**

In cases where the state holds the primary authority to enforce regulations for public water systems, the state may define a public water system. Therefore, some state definitions of what constitutes a public water system vary from the EPA's definition. A state's definition must be at least as stringent as the EPA regulations. In other words, the state may require that fewer service connections make up a public water system, but it can not define a public water system as anything larger than 15 service connections, or an average of 25 people served by the system.

This issue becomes significant to owners of shared wells because, if a well is classified as a public water system, its owners must follow the EPA's standards for drinking water testing and treatment. Unless the system is defined as a "public water system," it is not subject to EPA regulation.

The table on the following page shows what constitutes a public water system, for those states whose definition differs from the EPA's definition (at least 15 service connections, or an average of at least 25 people, for at least 60 days per year).

## **For more information on Public Water Systems**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Public Drinking Water Systems: Facts and Figures. Retrieved June 25, 2007 from [www.epa.gov/safewater/pws/factoids.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/pws/factoids.html)

**State Definitions: When Does a Well Become a Public Water System?**

<b>State</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Arizona	15 connections or 25 people served by the system (does not specify a timeframe)
California	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
Connecticut	25 individuals <b>year-round</b>
Delaware	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
Idaho	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
Indiana	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
Iowa	25 people served by the system
Louisiana	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
Maryland	25 people served by the system at least 6 months per year
Minnesota	More than 25 people served by the system
Nevada	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
New Hampshire	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
New York	5 connections or 25 people served by the system
North Dakota	15 connections or 25 people served by the system on a <b>regular basis</b>
Oklahoma	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>
Pennsylvania	25 people served by the system at least 6 months per year
South Carolina	Anything over 1 household per well
Virginia	15 connections or 25 people <b>regularly</b> served by the system
Wyoming	15 connections or 25 people served by the system <b>year-round</b>

**For more information about wells and other wellcare® publications**

wellcare® is a program of the **Water Systems Council (WSC)**. WSC is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the wider use of wells as modern and affordable safe drinking water systems and to protecting ground water resources nationwide. This publication is one in a series of wellcare® information sheets. There were more than 60 available at the time this document was published. They can be downloaded FREE from the WSC website at [www.watersystemscouncil.org](http://www.watersystemscouncil.org). Well owners and others with questions about wells or ground water can also contact the wellcare® hotline at **1-888-395-1033** or visit [www.wellcarehotline.org](http://www.wellcarehotline.org)



This publication was developed in part under Assistance Agreement No. EM-83331201-0 awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It has not been formally reviewed by EPA. The views expressed in this document are solely those of WSC. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this publication.