



# NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF THE RATEPAYER ADVOCATE

## CURRENT WATER ISSUES

### PRIVATE WELL TESTING ACT

In September 2002, the NJDEP announced a new program designed to protect the public from possible contamination of private wells. The program follows the move by the New Jersey Legislature to pass the Private Well Testing Act (PWTA). (*N.J.S.A. 58:12a-26 et seq.*) Throughout New Jersey, approximately one million people drink from 400,000 private wells. Most others in New Jersey get their drinking water from water utilities, municipal water systems, or other community water supplies that are already tested and monitored by the DEP and local health agencies.

The Act requires that, when property with certain types of private drinking water wells is sold or rented, the well water must be tested for contaminants. The results of the water testing must be reviewed by both buyer and seller, or in the case of a rental, by the renter. Before closing, both buyer and seller must certify in writing that the tests were performed and that the results were shared with the parties.

The quality of water supplied by water utilities and community water systems is currently tested and monitored by the DEP, and the results of these tests are available to the public. The PWTA now makes that information available to homeowners with private wells. The gathering and sharing of this information will raise awareness about the importance of regularly testing private wells, and result in critical water quality information being provided to residents statewide. The details of what must be tested under the PWTA is on the DEP website ([www.state.nj.us/dep](http://www.state.nj.us/dep)) and from a toll-free hotline, 1-866-4PW-TEST (1-866-479-8378).

The testing required by the PWTA will provide environmental and health agencies with information about groundwater in areas for which those agencies previously had little or no information. The test requirements vary by region throughout the state. The test results may

encourage further investigation in areas that reveal unacceptable levels of potential contaminants. New Jersey will have a much more complete picture of the overall health of its water supplies, and be able to track sources of potential contaminants more accurately and quickly than ever before.

These improvements to the testing of New Jersey's water supplies will mean healthier water for all of our residents, and give us a better chance to protect and preserve this most valuable resource.

### DROUGHT RESTRICTIONS EASED

Although New Jersey is still in the midst of the worst drought in decades, on October 24, 2002, the NJDEP eased drought restrictions that had been in place since August. Citing recent steady rain and declining water use due to the onset of cooler weather, the relaxed rules will allow homeowners to water lawns every other day based on their addresses. Owners of odd-numbered homes can water on odd-numbered days and owners of even-numbered homes can do so on even-numbered days. Additionally, cars now can be washed at home on the weekends. However, other drought rules will stay in place. For example, homes, sidewalks, and driveways cannot be washed down. Additionally, golf courses must limit their water use and restaurants cannot serve water unless requested by patrons.

Even though the drought restrictions have been eased, the DEP has kept the statewide drought emergency in place because groundwater levels are still below normal. We must continue to work together to protect our State's precious water resources for this and for future generations.

For more information on the drought, visit the DEP drought website at [www.njdrought.org](http://www.njdrought.org).



**AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL RATES FOR SELECT NEW JERSEY WATER COMPANIES**

**Company**

**\* Average Annual Bill    Last Rate Increase**

Consumers New Jersey	\$321.22	Aug.21, 2002
Crestwood Village	\$172.56	Feb. 18, 1998
Elizabethtown Water Co	\$279.67	Mar. 1, 2002
Gordons' Corner Water C.	\$375.40	July 13, 2001
Middlesex Water Co.	\$304.76	June 6, 2001
Mount Holly Water Co. - Mt. Holly	\$325.80	Jan. 1, 2000
Mount Holly Water Co. - Columbus	\$258.60	Jan. 1, 2000
New Jersey American - Adelphia System	\$521.33	Apr. 6, 2000
New Jersey American - Chester	\$272.40	Apr.12 1999
New Jersey American	\$404.70	Apr.6, 2000
New Jersey American - Howell	\$466.60	Apr. 6, 1999
New Jersey American - West Jersey	\$323.54	Apr. 6, 1999
Pennsgrove Water Co.	\$301.70	Sept. 27, 2000
Roxbury Water Co.	\$279.04	Aug. 1, 2002
Roxiticus Water Co.	\$522.04	Nov. 8, 2001
Shore Water Co.	\$362.44	Sept. 15, 2002
Shorelands Water Co.	\$376.64	June 10, 1998
Trenton Water Works	\$251.05	Apr. 12, 2001
United Water - Arlington Hills	\$205.60	Feb. 25, 1994
United Water - Toms River	\$290.60	Jan. 1, 1998
Wildwood Water	\$193.60	Sept. 5, 2002

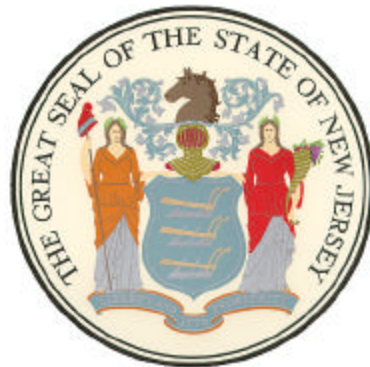
\* Based on a residential customer using 18,000 gallons of water per quarter

**Consumer Tip**

**Avoid Disconnections**

A water utility customer will be given notice before service is discontinued for non-payment. Most water companies also charge a turn-on fee after water has been discontinued for non-payment. If you are notified that service will be discontinued for non-payment, contact your water provider. You may be able to establish a payment plan to avoid loss of service.

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