



Frequently Asked Questions about Underground Injection Control Program Rule Revisions

From Ecology's Water Quality Program, Watershed Management Section

Background

The Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program protects ground water (water located under the ground surface) quality by regulating the disposal of fluids into the ground by way of a UIC well. For example, in Washington State thousands of UIC wells are used to manage storm water along parking lots and roads. UIC wells are also used to recharge ground water aquifers, to dispose of sanitary waste (large on-site septic system), and to enhance cleanup of polluted aquifers. The potential for ground water contamination from a UIC well is dependent upon:

- Well location and construction.
- Volume and quality of the fluids injected.
- Type of soil and subsurface material into which the fluid is injected.
- Distance between the bottom of the UIC well and the top of the ground water.

Q: What rules are open for revisions?

A: Ecology opened up two rules for revision that regulate UIC wells:

- Chapter 173-218 WAC Underground Injection Control Program. The proposed language contains several changes from the current rule that was adopted in 1984.
- Chapter 173-216 State Waste Discharge Program. The proposed language includes deleting one sentence in the rule.

Q: Why is the UIC rule being revised?

A: The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed revisions to the federal UIC program in 1999. Our state rule is now inconsistent with the new federal regulations, and in order for Ecology to continue to administer the UIC Program, our rule must be updated.

Q: What changes is Ecology proposing?

A: The Department of Ecology is proposing the following changes to the UIC rules:

- Add the federal UIC program modifications to the state UIC rule; changes include definitions (*i.e.*, "UIC well") and well types.
- Allow fluids from municipal, commercial, industrial and residential sources, and storm water into UIC wells if the requirements of the UIC rule are met.
- Describe what is needed to operate a Class V UIC well without a permit (rule authorization).

- Require owners of existing UIC wells to review their current use and determine if they are protective of ground water quality. For owners of stormwater wells, this includes identifying high risk wells and retrofitting them if necessary.
- Explain the requirements for closing a UIC well and list what types of UIC wells will automatically meet the ground water protection requirement of the rule.
- Revise the state waste discharge permit program rule to allow UIC wells in a permit.

Q: In the proposed rule, owners of existing UIC wells that manage storm water are required to complete a well assessment. Will additional information on completing well assessments be available to UIC well owners?

A: Yes, Ecology will publish guidance on managing UIC wells in Washington. The guidance will include how to complete a well assessment for different types of land uses, siting criteria and best management practices. Currently a draft section chapter 5.6, in the *Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington*, explains siting criteria and best management practices for UIC wells. This section will go through further review and be included in the final guidance for UIC wells

Q: How is Ecology going to implement the UIC Program?

A: Several elements are needed to implement the UIC Program. Ecology has a UIC database that holds the information collected from the registration forms. Two types of registration forms are available at the Ecology UIC webpage: a registration form for an owner of a few wells or sites and Excel spreadsheets for owners of many sites or many wells. Ecology is planning to:

- Build a web based registration approach to simplify the registration process for individual sites.
- Allow public access to the UIC database. The public will be able to view the UIC wells registered with Ecology.
- Work with local governments to include basic UIC program requirements in the building proposal/permit process.

Q: What's the schedule for the UIC rule revision?

- October 2001 - August 2004 - UIC rule advisory committee met seven times.
- November 2004 - Hold informational workshops.
- July 2005 - File proposed CR 102 form which begins the formal rule making process.
- July – September 2005 - Public comment period, including public hearings.
- October 2005 - tentative file date for CR-103 form which includes the final rule language.

Q: How can I find out more information on the UIC rule revision?

A: For more information please contact:

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Or e-mail question to: maha461@ecy.wa.gov

Additional information can be found at Ecology's Web site:
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/grndwtr/uic/index.html

If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact us at 360-407-6404. If you are a person with a speech or hearing impairment, call 711 or 800-833-6388 for TTY.