

# WELL CAPS: MORE THAN JUST A LID!

The cap that covers the well in your back yard was not put there just for decoration. It is actually a very important piece of your household well water system.

## WHAT MAKES A WELL CAP...WELL?

Look for the following components to see if your well cap is a sanitary seal cap:

- Two-piece cap
- Rubber seal between the two pieces of well cap
- Securing mechanisms (screws, bolts, etc.)
- Vented screen
- Electrical wiring outlet (conduit)

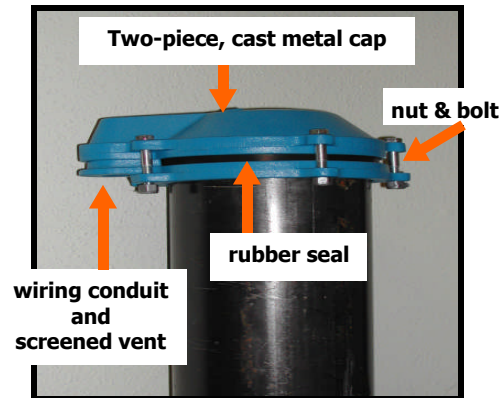
A sanitary well cap can be made of cast metal or plastic. However, metal is preferred because of the reduced risk for cracking and other damage, and metal is not subject to deterioration from sunlight.

The two pieces of a sanitary well cap are held together by securing mechanisms, usually nuts and bolts around the outer edges. This can also reduce the risk of unwanted tampering with your well cap.

The rubber seal is the key component of a sanitary well cap. It is important for reducing the chances of your well becoming contaminated from surface pollutants mentioned earlier. Periodically inspect the seal. Look for signs of aging and cracking and have it replaced if these characteristics are observed.

A vented screen is necessary to equalize the pressure difference between the inside and the outside of the well casing as water is pumped out of the well. Without a vent, a vacuum will be created within the well casing when the water level falls (during pumping or seasonal variations in water level). This may draw unwanted contaminants and debris into the well. The screen also eliminates another point of entry for insects into the well.

Proper well with a sanitary seal cap



## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE SEAL?

A properly sealed well cap prevents the well from becoming contaminated from surface pollutants.

If a well cover is not sealed properly, insects (such as earwigs) can crawl through gaps around the casing or through unscreened vents and form nests inside the well. Bacteria can reach unhealthy levels when enough cumulative dead bodies and droppings from the residing insects fall into the well water.

Water is the universal solvent. During spring runoff and storm events, surface water can encounter many different kinds of pollutants such as lawn pesticides and animal feces and easily transport them to your well. Because these and many other contaminants are not easily detected by taste or smell, laboratory testing is the best method of determining if any unsafe levels are present. Tests for coliform bacteria and nitrates should be taken annually regardless of whether your well cap is properly sealed because well water can become contaminated from many different sources.

Well with a non-sanitary seal cap



## **WHERE CAN I GET A SANITARY WELL CAP?**

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The Gallatin Local Water Quality District  
215 W. Mendenhall - Courthouse Annex, Suite E  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
(406) 582-3148 or 582-3145  
Cost: \$28.00

Contact any well drilling contractor in the local yellow pages.

## **INSTALLING A SANITARY SEAL WELL CAP**

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Installing a new well cap isn't as simple as taking off the old cap and putting the new cap in its place. Inside the well casing is a complex system of electrical wiring connecting the pump to your pressure tank and household distribution system. For your safety...

**WE STRONGLY RECOMMENDED HIRING A PROFESSIONAL WELL PUMP CONTRACTOR TO INSTALL YOUR NEW WELL CAP!**

***CAUTION: Electrical wiring contained inside well casing. ALL electrical power to the well system must be turned off prior to installation of a new well cap.***



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[www.gallatin.mt.gov/GLWQD](http://www.gallatin.mt.gov/GLWQD)