
 **FACT SHEET - Class V**

EPA Announces Regulatory Amendments As Part of a Comprehensive Management Strategy for Class V Wells

What is a Class V well?

Class V injection wells are generally shallow waste disposal wells, stormwater and agricultural drainage systems, or other devices that are used to release fluids above or into underground sources of drinking water (USDWs). EPA estimates that more than one million Class V wells currently exist in the United States.

Why are Class V wells of concern to EPA?

Some Class V wells may pose a significant risk to USDWs, while the majority pose little or no risk to human health or the environment. Class V wells are located in every State, especially in unsewered areas where the population is likely to depend on ground water. In some instances, the fluids released by these wells contain elevated concentrations of contaminants that may endanger drinking water supplies.

Frequently, Class V wells are designed as no more than shallow holes or septic tank and leachfield combinations intended for sanitary waste disposal. Such systems are sometimes misused for the disposal of industrial wastes or other fluids that have not been treated, releasing elevated levels of contaminants directly into the same ground water that is used as a drinking water supply by surrounding residences and communities. These wells are commonly located at automobile service stations, print shops, dry cleaners, shopping centers, equipment manufacturers, and other commercial and industrial establishments.

How does EPA regulate Class V wells?

Currently, all Class V wells are authorized by rule (i.e., under the purview of the UIC program) and are authorized to inject provided they do not endanger underground sources of drinking water and meet certain minimum requirements (e.g., provide inventory to State UIC programs).

What is EPA's strategy for addressing Class V wells?

Because of the diversity in the risks posed by Class V wells, and the size and nature of the regulated community, EPA believes that a traditional regulatory approach to addressing these wells would not be effective. To effectively address the unique challenges posed by the Class V universe, EPA is implementing a comprehensive strategy for the management of Class V injection wells. The strategy involves a carefully tailored combination of guidance, education, and outreach, and enhancing the use of existing regulatory authorities through some minor changes to the UIC regulations. The goal of the strategy will be to speed up the closure of potentially endangering Class V wells using current authorities and to promote the use of best management practices to ensure that other Class V wells do not endanger USDWs.

What new Class V requirements is EPA proposing?

EPA published a proposed rule, August 28, 1995, in the Federal Register containing minor regulatory changes which are intended to improve the effectiveness of the current Class V regulations by making it easier for the regulated community to understand the existing requirements applicable to Class V wells. The proposed changes include a simplification of the current categories of Class V wells, a clarification of certain key definitions to make it clear to the regulated community which types of shallow disposal systems are Class V wells and which are not, and a reclassification of deep low-level radioactive wells to Class I.

How can the public provide comments on the rule?

EPA will accept public comments, in writing, on the proposed regulations until October 27, 1995. EPA is planning a public hearing on the proposal, if public interest warrants, for October 18, 1995, in the EPA Auditorium of the EPA Training Center, Waterside Mall, 401 M Street, SW, Washington DC, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Address written comments to UIC Amendments, Water Docket (Mail Code 4101), USEPA, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460.

Whom should we contact if we have questions concerning this action?

For more information, contact the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or Lee Whitehurst at 1-202-260-5532.