

Activities that occur on the land surface can have a negative effect on your drinking water supply. Even when activities are well managed, accidents and spills can still happen. The downward movement of water in soil carries any contaminants (found at the surface or underground) to the aquifer below. Aquifers close to the surface, such as the shallow sand and gravel aquifer found along the Muskingum River Valley, are especially vulnerable to contamination because of the relatively short travel distance from the ground surface to the aquifer.

Many activities that can potentially contaminate an aquifer occur in urban areas. Potential pollution sources are

- industry,
- fertilizers from lawns and gardens,
- construction sites,
- street runoff of oil, gas and road salt

Vegetation, which normally slows down contaminants from getting into a waterway, is scarce in urban areas, allowing contaminants to more easily enter the soil and travel faster and farther over land.

Rural areas can contribute contaminants such as

- fertilizers, pesticides & herbicides from agricultural areas,
- livestock waste,
- household waste from septic systems,
- road run off,
- leaking underground storage tanks
- old or illegal dump sites.

Contamination of ground water is a serious problem because contaminants often travel unnoticed until detected in a water supply well. The contaminant disperses in the ground water, and may impact clean ground water for many years. Once contaminated, an aquifer is both difficult and expensive to clean up. In many cases, these costs are passed along to consumers through increased water bills or taxes. Contaminated drinking water causes problems that can range from harmless effects (such as an unpleasant taste) to serious health problems.

As a resident of the Muskingum River Valley, we encourage you to learn about things that can be done around your home to help protect your ground water resources.

These include:

- limiting the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and other lawn and garden chemicals

- disposing of unused chemicals at Washington County Household Hazardous Waste Day held each April, DO NOT dispose of hazardous chemicals down the drain

- recycling used motor oil and antifreeze

- having septic systems pumped out and inspected every 3-5 years