

# What is a "Certified Flow Test"

by

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As a water well inspector I often am asked by REALTORS® to conduct a “**certified flow test**” on a private water well as called for in the Arizona Association of REALTORS® Domestic Water Well Addendum form (DWWA5/05, Item C.). This form calls for a “**certified flow test**” of a private water well to be conducted during the inspection period. The term certified, however, is not defined anywhere in the form, nor is the manner in which the flow test is to be conducted. This ambiguity leads to a lot of confusion at a critical time in the designated inspection period.

Licensed REALTORS® in the State of Arizona are certainly familiar with the designation **Certified Home Inspector**. Used in this connotation, the term Certified is a form of licensure, since without the State's Certification, you are prohibited from practicing the trade of doing home inspections. The term Certified as used on this AAR form does not apply to Home Inspectors, because water wells were excluded from the items that Certified Home Inspectors were to inspect. Arizona has yet to establish rules or laws that designate who can perform water well inspections.

In most other fields, the term Certified has a very different and specific meaning, It is most often a peer endorsement. For instance, a Certified Public Accountant, (CPA) or a Certified Flight Instructor, (CFI) are readily recognized. In these fields the certification is a peer review designation, and the Certification is only as good as the public's perception of the value of the peer review. The same is true of the National Association of Realtors designation Certified Residential Specialist, or CRS.

After all, anyone has the option of using a non certified accountant, flight instructor, or for that matter REALTOR®, if they should choose. For home inspections in Arizona, you don't have that choice. You must use a State Certified Home Inspector. Unfortunately the AAR's form doesn't tell us if it is the well tester who must be certified when conducting the test, or is it the flow test procedures during the test, or is it the results that must be certified as being of a sufficient quantity for the Buyer.

. Just as ambiguous is the issue of someone stating that the water supplied by a private well is “**certified potable**,” as called for when federal funding is involved. Be aware that there are **no** established standards for water quantity or quality for private water wells in Arizona. They are virtually unregulated. There are, however, water quality standards established by the EPA for public water supplies. Could we, or should we, consider these as the “**certified potable**” standards to be applied to private water wells? If we do, the cost to home buyers who are buying a property with a private water well increase dramatically. Water quality testing and analysis by Certified laboratories includes highly technical

procedures, using very sophisticated equipment, and thus they require an appreciable amount of time to complete, and they are expensive!

It appears to me that the AAR form is asking for something that has not been defined and the mortgage underwriters are asking the inspectors to certify that the water is "safe and potable" without having a standard to meet. From my perspective, that's more than a little scary. Until the terms "**certified flow test**" and "**certified potable**" water have been clearly defined, and the people who perform these tests understand what they are certifying, it's going to be hard to have parity among the pump test and water quality reports that buyers and lenders are getting.

I would hope that we could develop some practical standards for what certified means when referring to ground water quantity and quality coming from a private water well. It is permissible for someone to say that there is sufficient water quantity today, and the water is safe and potable today, but not guarantee what will the quantity or quality of the water in a week, a month, or a year later? Certifying that a given water well can produce a specified amount of water per day for a specified number of years into the future, together with a second certification that the water is always going to be safe and potable is a very long stretch for a well inspector. I know that I'm not going to make that certification.

I am promoting that for the sake of both REALTORS®, and the water well service industry that this issue be clarified. When the term **certified flow test** is used it should mean that a flow test was conducted on a private water well by an individual who is Certified by an agency, or an association that is relevant to this type of work. The report could state in it an average current sustained yield of the well, an observed recovery rate, and an estimate of the volume in gallons per day that the well can be expected to deliver with the present equipment. It would then be up to the well inspector to state clearly in their report that it does not warrant that the well will always produce that same amount, or the same quality, of water in the future.

The AAR may, or may not, want to establish a minimum sustained yield that would be a "pass" or "fail" number for private water wells. As it is now, I could certify that a given well produces a ½ of a gallon-per-minute and there is no scale with which to judge if this is sufficient. The modified form must then be passed on to the REALTORS® who are charged with obtaining these reports, and finally to the water well inspectors who must sign their name under the word "**certified**". This issue may be small in comparison to the total number of homes being inspected, but it is an issue of critical importance to REALTORS® who list and sell a home with a private water well, and it is equally important to the prospective buyer.