



Protecting Drinking Water: UIC Class VI Fact Sheets



Underground Injection Control Program: Protecting Drinking Water Resources for Over 30 Years

What is the UIC Program?

The U.S. EPA's Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program has comprehensively regulated injection wells for over 30 years. The UIC Program prevents contaminants from entering our drinking water resources, protecting human health and the environment.

Each year more than 750 billion gallons of fluids are disposed of through underground injection. These fluids may come from industries, municipalities, and small businesses that dispose of wastewater, extract mineral resources, and store water for the future.

Improper injection of fluids can contaminate drinking water resources, and preventing this contamination is vital to assuring that fresh drinking water is available for the present and future. Safe and clean drinking water resources are essential for our growing population. The UIC Program protects human health by preventing contaminants associated with injection activities from entering underground sources of drinking water (USDWs).

The UIC Program regulates a wide variety of injection wells with different depths, geology, and injectates

The UIC Program regulates over 200,000 Class I, II, and III wells that inject non-hazardous and hazardous waste into deep geologic formations.

The UIC Program also oversees 600,000–800,000 Class V wells that inject non-hazardous fluids into or above USDWs. These wells are typically shallow, on-site wastewater disposal systems.

Six Classes of Injection Wells

Class I: Wells used to dispose of non-hazardous and hazardous industrial wastewater and municipal wastewater.

Class II: Wells associated with oil and gas production and/or storage.

Class III: Wells associated with solution mining.

Class IV: Wells used to inject hazardous or radioactive wastes into or above USDWs. (Note: these wells are banned nationwide except under waste site cleanup programs.)

Class V: All wells not included in Classes I-IV and VI, such as stormwater drainage wells and septic system leach fields.

Class VI: Wells used to inject carbon dioxide (CO₂) for the purpose of long-term storage, also known as geologic sequestration.

The UIC Program (continued)

The UIC Program works to protect human health and the environment

The Safe Drinking Water Act established the UIC Program to set minimum federal requirements for injection wells that discharge hazardous and non-hazardous fluids below, above, or into USDWs. The requirements specify the siting, construction, operation, maintenance, monitoring, testing, and closure of injection wells.

Injection wells require authorization under UIC rules or specific permits. Injection that may endanger a USDW is prohibited.

The UIC Program: Over 30 Years of Regulation



1974

Congress passes the Safe Drinking Water Act, giving EPA the authority to regulate underground injection to protect USDWs.

1980s

EPA issues UIC regulations that define five classes of injection wells and set minimum standards for state permitting authorities.

1990s

EPA develops a Class V management strategy that results in the Class V Rule.

2008

EPA proposes a new well class for geologic sequestration of CO₂.

2010

EPA issues final regulations adding a new class (Class VI) for geologic sequestration.