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How to Check Your Well Pressure Tank (Air Charge & Basic Function Check)

What You'll Need

- Tire pressure gauge
- Air compressor or bicycle pump
- Small screwdriver or wrench (if needed)
- Towel or bucket
- Hose if there is a drain valve

Step 1: Turn Off Power to the Well

- Turn off the breaker that supplies power to the well pump.
- This is critical for safety and to get an accurate reading.

Step 2: Drain the Water Pressure

1. Open a faucet or drain valve near the pressure tank.
2. Let the water run until it completely stops.
3. Leave the faucet open while checking the tank.

The system must have zero water pressure when checking air pressure.

Step 3: Locate the Air Valve

- Find the air valve (Schrader valve) on the pressure tank.
- It looks like a tire valve and is usually:
 - On the top of the tank, or
 - On the side near the top

Step 4: Check the Air Pressure

1. Press the tire gauge onto the air valve.
2. Read the pressure.

Correct Air Pressure:

- The tank should be set 2 PSI below the pump cut-in pressure.

Examples:

- 30/50 pressure switch → Tank set to 28 PSI
- 40/60 pressure switch → Tank set to 38 PSI

Step 5: Adjust Air Pressure (If Needed)

- If pressure is low: Add air using a compressor or bike pump.
- If pressure is too high: Press the valve briefly to release air.

Recheck until the correct PSI is reached.

Step 6: Turn Power Back On

1. Close the faucet you opened earlier.
2. Turn the breaker back on.
3. Let the system refill and build pressure.

Step 7: Observe System Operation

- The pump should:
 - Run smoothly
 - Shut off at the normal cut-out pressure
- Water pressure should feel steady.

Warning Signs of a Bad Pressure Tank

- Water spurts or pressure fluctuates
- Pump turns on and off rapidly (short cycling)
- Tank feels heavy or full of water when tapped
- Air comes out of the air valve instead of water (good)
Water comes out of the air valve = bad bladder

Important Notes

- Never check air pressure while the system is pressurized.
- If the tank will not hold air, the bladder is likely failed.
- If unsure of pressure switch settings, contact a professional.