

Abandoned Wells

What is an abandoned well?

An abandoned well is a well which no longer is used to supply water; or a well that is in such a state of disrepair that it threatens the public health and safety. Each year, many wells are abandoned when they are replaced with new wells or when homes are connected to community water systems. Additionally, homeowners may discover abandoned wells that were not listed in the purchase paperwork due to incomplete or missing records.

Why are abandoned wells dangerous?

Abandoned wells are dangerous because they pose a safety threat to people and animals that may become severely injured or even die as a result of falling into them. For example, in Witt, Illinois, a 20 month old infant died when she fell through a 10 inch hole which had opened up in the concrete cap of an abandoned well.

Abandoned wells are also dangerous because they provide a direct pathway for contamination to reach ground water. Contaminants that enter ground water through a well may affect a very large area underground, resulting in unsafe water for you and your neighbors.

How do I find an abandoned well?

Always approach an abandoned well with caution.

Here are some things to look for:

- Old windmills or pump houses.
- Pipes sticking out of the ground.
- Depressions in the earth.
- Concrete vaults, pits, or tile.
- Old hand pumps.
- Old plywood lying on the ground or over concrete tiles or vaults.
- A hole in the ground, 3 to 4 feet in diameter with a stone or brick lining.

I have an abandoned well, now what do I do?



If you have an abandoned well on your property it must be sealed. Just capping the well is not enough to prevent it from becoming a problem. The only way to reduce safety hazards and ground water contamination associated with abandoned wells is to seal them. If you are replacing an old well or connecting to a public water supply, the old well must be sealed.

How a well is sealed depends on several factors, such as depth, well design, and geology. It is best to contact a Licensed Water Well Construction Contractor to seal a well. A homeowner has the option of submitting a request to the Health Department to seal their own well. Once permission from the Health Department is obtained, an inspection will occur at the time of well sealing.

For more information regarding sealing an abandoned well, please contact the Environmental Health Division of the Peoria City/County Health Department at 309-679-6161.



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