

ABANDONING A WELL

What You Need to Know

Abandoned wells can be a tremendous liability for a well owner.

There are reports every year of children and pets falling into abandoned wells. They pose a health concern by acting as conduits for contaminants to move from the surface, through the earth's protective formations, into the deeper aquifers; drinking water contamination has been caused by abandoned wells. They also threaten the environment - due to deteriorated well casings or open, uncased boreholes that allow movement of water between previously separated aquifers - degrading water quality. Abandoned wells have also been used for illegal waste dumping.

When a well is abandoned, it should be plugged (filled up with an impervious material) rather than capped, to prevent contamination of the freshwater aquifer by unknown material from the surface that may contain illness causing bacteria and viruses. This includes dry holes, wells that are being replaced by a new well, wells that no longer produce water, or any other case where a well is no longer being used.

An abandoned well shall include:

- A well that is permanently discontinued.
- A well which is in such disrepair that its continued use for the purpose of obtaining groundwater is impractical.
- A well that has been left uncompleted.
- A well that is a threat to groundwater resources.
- A well that may be a health or safety hazard.

Who is responsible for plugging abandoned wells?

The well owner or property owner is responsible for making sure any abandoned well on their property is properly plugged.

Who can plug a well?

Only registered well drillers can plug wells - not pump installers.

For more information

Visit one of the links below or contact the Oakland County Health Division.

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Private Drinking Water Wells: <https://www.epa.gov/privatewells>
- Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) – Abandoned Water Wells: <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/drinking-water-and-environmental-health/water-well-construction/abandoned-water-wells>

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