

Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From: Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District
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Plugging Abandoned Wells

La Grange, Texas—

An unused and unmaintained well that hasn't been properly plugged and sealed poses health and safety hazards for animals and humans, especially children. According to Texas law, a well is considered abandoned if it has not been used for six consecutive months. Under Texas law, a landowner is responsible for plugging abandoned wells on his or her property and, therefore, liable for any water contamination or injury that might result from such a well.

A well that is no longer used or maintained can become a direct channel for surface water or run-off to reach the aquifer. Contaminants that enter a well are introduced directly into the aquifer with no opportunity for natural filtration by soils or geologic materials. Unused and unmaintained wells threaten the groundwater that supplies your well, and possibly your neighbors' wells. This puts other wells in the aquifer at risk, particularly those wells on the same property or those that are close to the abandoned well.

How can you take care of an abandoned well? An abandoned well can be fixed by three different methods: returning the well to an operable state; capping the well to prevent surface water or contaminants from entering the well; or by plugging the well. If capped, the cap should support 400 pounds and should not be easily removable by hand. If plugged, the well should be plugged from the bottom to the top with bentonite (a porous clay that swells), bentonite grout or portland cement (a kind of cement that hardens under water). Large diameter wells can be filled with clay or caliche soil.

A landowner can plug a well under certain circumstances. In some cases it is recommended that you hire a licensed water well driller or pump installer to seal and plug an abandoned well. Well contractors have the equipment and an understanding of soil conditions to determine how a well should be properly plugged. If you simply fill up your unused well with sand, gravel, debris, or garbage, you won't prevent the flow of surface water or run-off into the well. The material in the unused well may even contribute to contamination of your groundwater source.

Contact the Fayette County Groundwater Conservation District at (979) 968-3135 for more information.

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SOURCE: FAYETTE COUNTY GCD