



SEALING ABANDONED WELLS

March, 2000

Why?

Safety: Abandoned large diameter wells are dangerous. People, animals or equipment can fall into them causing injury or death.

Environmental: Wells are direct orifices to aquifers. Spilled fuels or chemicals near or in abandoned wells can cause groundwater contamination. Polluted surface waters can pollute wells.

How?

Step 1: Get as much information on the well as you can. Sources are the Groundwater Section of the Water Resources Branch and well drillers. They will need the land location (section, township and range) and, if possible, the names of the original owner and the driller. If wells flow or are contaminated, qualified contractors should do the abandonment.

Step 2: Disconnect any electrical service to the well. Remove pumps, hoses or anything else in the well. If the clear depth of the well is close to the original reported depth, then sealing can proceed (see Step 3). If there are obstructions, these should be removed. If they can't be removed, call a drilling contractor, Water Resources or The Manitoba Water Services Board for further advice.

Step 3: Chlorinate, then start backfilling the well with a fine to medium sand (preferably silty sand). For small diameter wells (less than 15 inches), place a shovelful or two of bentonite chips or pellets every 20 to 30 feet of hole filled. For large diameter wells, place a layer (approximately 6 inches) of bentonite just below the water table. Backfill the wells to approximately 3 or 4 feet below ground level. Leave the wells sit for a period of time (1 or 2 weeks) to allow the fill to settle. The top 3 or 4 feet of the well can then be dug up and clay and soil placed over the cut-off well.

Step 4: Fill out an "Abandoned Well Report" and send to Water Resources (see reverse).

Contacts

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Drilling Contractors – See Yellow Pages or contact the above agencies.

Information prepared by: The Manitoba Water Services Board, Box 22080, 2022 Currie Blvd., Brandon, MB R7A 6Y9
For further information, please contact your Regional Farm Water Source Technologist at one of the following locations:

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