

PONOKA COUNTY

Appendix C

General Water Well Information

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Domestic Water Well Testing

Purpose and Requirements

The purpose of the testing of domestic water wells is to obtain background data related to:

- 1) the non-pumping water level for the aquifer - Has there been any lowering of the level since the last measurement?
- 2) the specific capacity of the water well, which indicates the type of contact the water well has with the aquifer;
- 3) the transmissivity of the aquifer and hence an estimate of the projected long-term yield for the water well;
- 4) the chemical, bacteriological and physical quality of the groundwater from the water well.

The testing procedure involves conducting an aquifer test and collecting of groundwater samples for analysis by an accredited laboratory. The date and time of the testing are to be recorded on all data collection sheets. A sketch showing the location of the water well relative to surrounding features is required. The sketch should answer the question, "If this water well is tested in the future, how will the person doing the testing know this is the water well I tested?"

The water well should be taken out of service as long as possible before the start of the aquifer test, preferably not less than 30 minutes before the start of pumping. The non-pumping water level is to be measured 30, 10, and 5 minutes before the start of pumping and immediately before the start of pumping which is to be designated as time 0 for the test. All water levels must be from the same designated reference, usually the top of the casing. Water levels are to be measured during the pumping interval and during the recovery interval after the pump has been turned off; all water measurements are to be with an accuracy of ± 0.01 metres.

During the pumping and recovery intervals, the water level is to be measured at the appropriate times. An example of the time schedule for a four-hour test is as follows, measured in minutes after the pump is turned on and again after the pump is turned off:

1,2,3,4,6,8,10,13,16,20,25,32,40,50,64,80,100,120.

For a four-hour test, the reading after 120 minutes of pumping will be the same as the 0 minutes of recovery. Under no circumstance will the recovery interval be less than the pumping interval.

Flow rate during the aquifer test should be measured and recorded with the maximum accuracy possible. Ideally, a water meter with an accuracy of better than $\pm 1\%$ displaying instantaneous and total flow should be used. If a water meter is not available, then the time required to completely fill a container of known volume should be recorded, noting the time to the nearest 0.5 seconds or better. Flow rate should be determined and recorded often to ensure a constant pumping rate.

Groundwater samples should be collected as soon as possible after the start of pumping and within 10 minutes of the end of pumping. Initially only the groundwater samples collected near the end of the pumping interval need to be submitted to the accredited laboratory for analysis. All samples must be properly stored for transportation to the laboratory and, in the case of the bacteriological analysis, there is a maximum time allowed between the time the sample is collected and the time the sample is delivered to the laboratory. The first samples collected are only analyzed if there is a problem or a concern with the first samples submitted to the laboratory.

Procedure

Site Diagrams

These diagrams are a map showing the distance to nearby significant features. This would include things like a corner of a building (house, barn, garage etc.) or the distance to the half-mile or mile fence. The description should allow anyone not familiar with the site to be able to unequivocally identify the water well that was tested. In lieu of a map, UTM coordinates accurate to within five metres would be acceptable. If a hand-held GPS is used, the post-processing correction details must be provided.

Surface Details

The type of surface completion must be noted. This will include such things as a pitless adapter, well pit, pump house, in basement, etc. Also, the reference point used for measuring water levels needs to be noted. This would include top of casing (TOC) XX metres above ground level; well pit lid, XX metres above TOC; TOC in well pit XX metres below ground level.

Groundwater Discharge Point

Where was the flow of groundwater discharge regulated? For example was the discharge through a hydrant downstream from the pressure tank; discharged directly to ground either by connecting directly above the well seal or by pulling the pump up out of the pitless adapter; from a tap on the house downstream from the pressure tank? Also note must be made if any action was taken to ensure the pump would operate continuously during the pumping interval and whether the groundwater was passing through any water-treatment equipment before the discharge point.

Water-Level Measurements

How were the water-level measurements obtained? If obtained using a contact gauge, what type of cable was on the tape, graduated tape or a tape with tags? If a tape with tags, when was the last time the tags were calibrated? If a graduated tape, what is the serial number of the tape and is the tape shorter than its original length (i.e. is any tape missing)?

If water levels are obtained using a transducer and data logger, the serial numbers of both transducer and data logger are needed and a copy of the calibration sheet. The additional information required is the depth the transducer was set and the length of time between when the transducer was installed and when the calibration water level was measured, plus the length of time between the installation of the transducer and the start of the aquifer test. All water levels must be measured at least to the nearest 0.01 metres.

Discharge Measurements

Type of water meter used. This could include such things as a turbine or positive displacement meter. How were the readings obtained from the meter? Were the readings visually noted and recorded or were they recorded using a data logger?

Water Samples

A water sample must be collected between the 4- and 6-minute water-level measurements, whenever there is an observed physical change in the groundwater being pumped, and 10 minutes before the end of the planned pumping interval. Additional water samples must be collected if it is expected that pumping will be terminated before the planned pumping interval.

Plugging Abandoned Wells

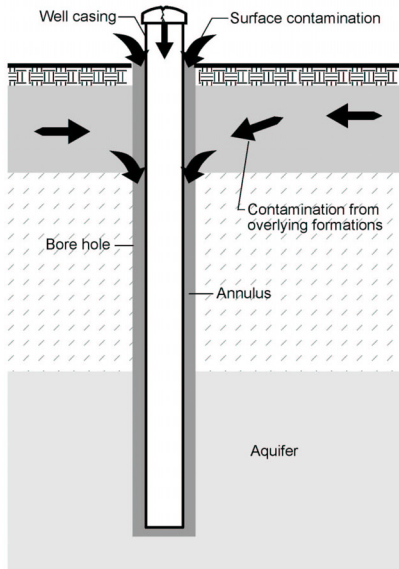
Adapted from Water Wells that Last Generations (PFRA 2000)

Module 9 – Plugging Abandoned Wells



For more information refer to the Water Wells That Last video series Part II – Managing and Maintaining.

Figure 1 Well Contamination



Wells that are no longer being used should be plugged. They are a serious public safety and environmental hazard.

Plugging Abandoned Wells

When a well is no longer being used or maintained for future use, it is considered abandoned. Abandoned wells pose a serious threat to the preservation of groundwater quality. They are also a serious safety hazard for children and animals.

There are approximately 59,000 farmsteads in Alberta and most of these have at least one well. In addition there are a great number of non-farming rural residents that rely on water wells. The exact number of abandoned wells in Alberta is unknown but is estimated to be in the tens of thousands. Plugging an abandoned well prevents:

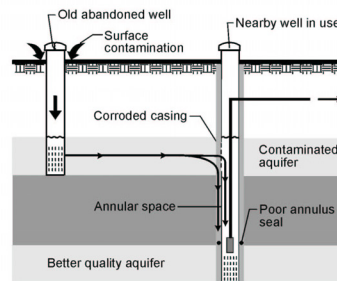
- Downward movement of water in the well or well annulus
- Surface contamination from reaching aquifers
- Intermixing of water between aquifers of different water quality
- Serious accidents from happening.

Unfortunately, groundwater contamination and its effects are usually not recognized until groundwater quality is seriously affected and nearby wells have been contaminated. Surface contaminants can enter a well several ways:

- Directly through the surface opening if the cap is loose, cracked or missing
- Through unsealed spaces along the outside of the casing (see Figure 1, Well Contamination).

When the steel casing of an abandoned well starts to corrode, holes will develop. When this takes place, surface contaminants or poor quality water from shallow aquifers may migrate into the deeper aquifers of nearby operating wells (see Figure 2, Contamination From an Abandoned Well).

Figure 2 Contamination From an Abandoned Well



Module 9 – Plugging Abandoned Wells

Who is Responsible?

In Alberta, responsibility for plugging a water well is defined by legislation. The well owner is responsible for plugging the well when:

- The well is no longer being used as a water supply
- The well is in a poor state of repair and the pumping equipment has been removed or cannot be repaired or replaced
- The well produces water that is unsuitable for drinking.

The drilling contractor is legally responsible for immediately plugging a well when it is not completed due to construction problems or inadequate yield. Before you sign a contract with a driller, ask questions about what materials are going to be used to plug the well and associated costs.

It is generally best to hire a drilling contractor to complete the plugging of your well. This person has the expertise and equipment to do a proper job. Unless you use the right plugging materials and have them properly placed in the well, you will end up with a poorly sealed well that will continue to allow contaminants to enter into the groundwater. When a replacement well is drilled, your old well should be immediately plugged.

Process of Plugging a Well

There are several steps to take before actually plugging the well. Some steps you will be able to do yourself and others you may want to consult with, or hire, a drilling contractor to complete.

Preparation

To know exactly how much plugging material is needed, measure the total depth and diameter of the well, plus the non-pumping water level (the depth to the standing water in the well). If possible, compare these measurements to the information on the drilling report from when the well was originally constructed. The only time you should even consider plugging a well yourself is when the well is open to its original depth.

Ideally the casing should be removed from the well before the plugging process begins. Often only the liner casing is removed and the surface casing is left intact because it is more difficult to remove and it could separate down hole. The older the well, the more difficult it will be to successfully remove the casing. If the casing is left in place, it should be perforated, particularly if there is evidence of water movement in the annulus of the well. Any casing left in place must be cut off 0.5 m (20 in.) below ground surface after the well is plugged.

For information on how to take a non-pumping water level measurement, see Module 5 "Monitoring Your Water Well."