



Two Keys To Protecting Water Wells From Contamination

(NAPSA)—Over 15 million U.S. households rely on private, household wells for drinking water, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.

If your family is ever among them, you should know how to protect your water quality. Two of the most important considerations are a proper well cap and plugging any abandoned wells on your property, advises the National Ground Water Association.

Why Cap A Well

If an active water well is not capped properly—or if an abandoned well is not plugged properly—it can be a direct pathway for contamination from above the ground to groundwater used by well owners for drinking.

Private well owners are responsible for making sure their wells are properly capped and any abandoned wells on their property are properly plugged.

What makes for a properly capped water well? Not just any covering will do on top of the well casing, that vertical pipe that extends above the ground in a water well. A proper well cap should:

- Be bolted or locked, so it cannot be easily removed
- Have a rubber seal to prevent anything from infiltrating the well where the cap is joined to the well casing
- Be in good condition.

A well cap that lacks a rubber seal or is cracked or otherwise broken can allow bugs, vermin, bacteria or other types of contaminants above the ground surface into the well, while even a tight-fitting well cap that is not bolted or locked can be jarred loose or removed by someone other than the well owner.

Well caps should be installed by a water well system professional and any well cap maintenance or replacement should be done by a professional. Also, a well system should be disinfected when a well cap is installed, repaired or replaced.

How To Plug An Abandoned Well

It can sometimes be a challenge to find abandoned wells on your property. Some abandoned wells are less obvious than others. Look for:

- Pipes sticking out of the ground
- Small buildings that may have been well houses



Leaving an abandoned well uncapped could cause a “hole” lot of trouble for homeowners.

- Depressions in the ground
- Concrete vaults or pits
- Out-of-use windmills
- Additions to an old home that might cover up an abandoned well.

Old, abandoned wells can also be found by consulting your neighbors and old maps, property plans or property title documents. A water well system professional may do additional checking—including a records check—for more information about abandoned wells.

To properly plug an abandoned well, the professional should:

1. Remove all material from the well that may hinder proper plugging
2. Disinfect the well
3. Use a specialized grout that both keeps surface water from working its way into the borehole and prevents water from different levels in the subsurface from mixing.

How Much Will It Cost?

This depends on several factors including the depth and diameter of the well, the geology of the area and the well's accessibility and condition.

Learn More

Visit www.WellOwner.org for further information about protecting groundwater and water well maintenance. There, you'll find:

- Webpages on well maintenance and groundwater protection
- Online lessons and webinars
- A well owner app and corresponding online well owner's manual
- Access to a monthly Private Well Owner Tip Sheet.

These resources and more have been underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in cooperation with the Rural Community Assistance Partnership.