

PLUGGING WELLS

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Abandoned wells are a problem because they provide a direct conduit between the surface and the drinking water aquifers through which contaminants can move.

1. Why do I need to plug an abandoned or deteriorated well on my property?

Abandoned and/or deteriorated wells serve as direct conduits to your groundwater or aquifer. The contamination can affect water wells in the area including those used for drinking water. An example of the dangers of abandoned wells can be seen below – a horse that fell into an uncovered, open, abandoned and deteriorated hand-dug water well. Luckily, the horse survived!

2. Can I just place a cover over a large diameter well?

No. Large-diameter, as well as drilled wells must be non-deteriorated and capped with a covering capable of both preventing surface pollutants from entering the well and sustaining weight of at least four hundred (400) pounds. The covering must be constructed in such a way that it cannot be easily removed by hand.

3. How do I identify an abandoned well?

Usually you will find plastic, steel, brick or concrete casing (pipe), extending above ground (pictures [1](#), [3](#) and [6](#)) or a hole in the ground with no apparent bottom (pictures [2](#) and [5](#)). Some abandoned wells have cement or brick casing extending above ground. Those wells are usually called large diameter or hand dug (picture [4](#)) wells. Below are some examples of abandoned wells:



Picture 1. Abandoned well w/casing and pump



Picture 2. Abandoned well open hole



Picture 3. Abandoned well PVC casing. No annular cement or surface completion.



Picture 4. Large Diameter/Hand Dug Abandoned Well



Picture 5. Abandoned well covered with plywood



Picture 6. Capped abandoned well with deteriorated casing

4. I have identified an abandoned and/or deteriorated well on my property, can I plug it myself?

Yes, the statutes and rules allows the landowner themselves to plug a well on their own property. The landowner is required to plug the well in accordance with the 16 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 76.1004 well plugging specifications and submit a [State of Texas Plugging Report](#).

5. Where can I find the well plugging specifications?

By accessing the WWD/PI Section's [Well Construction and Plugging Specifications](#) or the [Landowner's Guide to Plugging Abandoned Water Wells](#).

6. I have plugged my well. How and where do I submit the TDLR required State of Texas Plugging Report ?

Option 1 – You can [download the Plugging Report](#) from our website. Complete it, sign it, and submit the original to:

TDLR
Water Well Driller/Pump Installer Section
PO Box 12157
Austin, TX 78711

Also mail a copy to your local Groundwater Conservation District, if applicable. The Texas Water Development Board has a [map of conservation districts](#) that you can check (this link will open a new browser window).

Option 2 – You may also submit the Plugging Report electronically by sending an e-mail to abandoned.well@license.state.tx.us and requesting a user ID and password. To submit the report online you must have the Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates. You must determine the latitude and longitude of the well. You can accomplish this by utilizing a hand-held GPS unit or by using a mapping website such as Maptech.com or Terraserver.com.

7. How soon after I plug my well do I need to submit a plugging report?

30 days from the date the well was plugged.

8. Can I hire someone to plug a well located on my property?

Yes. However, the individual must be a TDLR licensed driller or pump installer.

9. Where can I find the names of licensed drillers and pump installers in my area?

You can [search for licensed drillers and pump installers in the TDLR Licensing Database](#).

10. The abandoned well on my property has casing extending above the ground surface, can I just fill the casing with cement and leave the casing sticking up?

No. State plugging specifications require that you remove all removable casing. You must attempt to pull the casing. Depending on the circumstances, if the casing cannot be pulled, it is required to cut the casing off as far below ground level as possible and plug the well from the bottom to the top.

11. I just bought some land and found an old well. Who is responsible for plugging or bringing the well into compliance?

The landowner of record.

12. The plugging specifications say that I need to pump cement to the surface. However, I would like to plant grass over the spot of the old well. Is this possible?

Although the specifications require the well to be cemented to the surface, allowances are made to stop the cement plug up to 4 feet below ground level (plow depth).

GENERAL

1. Does the TDLR regulate public water supply (PWS) wells?

No. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's Plan Review Section regulates the well construction specifications. Their phone number is 512/239-6960. The Department of Licensing and Regulation regulates the licensed water well driller who drills Public Water Supply wells and the licensed water well pump installer who installs the pump.

2. Who is responsible for plugging an abandoned and/or deteriorated water well?

The landowner.

3. Where do I send a plugging report?

Mail it to Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation at PO Box 12157, Austin, TX 78711 or submit it online via the [State of Texas](#)

[Well Report Submission and Retrieval System](http://134.125.70.235/mainpage.asp) located at <http://134.125.70.235/mainpage.asp>.

4. Who can plug an existing water well?

A licensed well driller and/or licensed pump installer or the landowner themselves.

5. How do I obtain grid maps?

The Texas Natural Resource Information Services (TNRIS) maintains grid maps. The TNRIS phone number is 512/463-8773.

6. What is the required separation distance between a water well and septic systems?

50 feet from a septic tank and 100 feet from drain fields or spray areas with minimum well construction specifications met.

7. How close to property lines can a water well be placed?

50 feet from property lines, with minimum well construction requirements met or up to 5 feet from property lines if the annular space is 3-inches larger than the outside diameter of the casing and pressure cemented or grouted from 100 feet back to the surface or from the top of the water production zone, whichever is shallower.

HOW TO PLUG AN ABANDONED WELL

STEP 1: Pumps, drop-pipes, pump rods, packers, wire, check valves, and all other debris or obstructions must be removed from the well. Registered well drilling contractors have the knowledge and proper equipment to perform this very important task.

STEP 2: The well depth and diameter must be measured in order to calculate the necessary amount of plugging material. Also, different well types (i.e. dug, drilled, driven) that terminate in different geologic formations (i.e. rock, drift) require different types of plugging

material and different plugging methods. The water well record has this information.

STEP 3: The well is plugged by a registered well drilling contractor.

STEP 4: An Abandoned Well Plugging Record is completed and submitted to the local health department, the well owner, and to the DEQ within 60 days upon completion of the well plugging project.