

## PLUGGING WELLS

*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.

### 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 6. Capped abandoned well with deteriorated casing



Picture 5. Abandoned well covered with plywood

**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?**

You can access 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.

**Option 2** – You may also submit the Plugging Report electronically by sending an e-mail to [abandoned.well@license.state.tx.us](mailto: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 is responsible.

**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.

**3. Who can plug an existing water well?**

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

**4. How do I obtain grid maps?**

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

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

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

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

Water wells can be located 50 feet from property lines. Water wells placed closer than 50' to property lines requires board approval.