

Protecting Groundwater

Groundwater is found in underground geologic formations called aquifers. Ordinarily the layers of rock and soil that lie between an aquifer and the surface, or between aquifers, act as a natural barrier against the spread of contamination. However, an unused, unsealed well can provide an open channel between the surface and an aquifer or between a shallow aquifer and a deeper aquifer. An unused well can act as a drain, allowing surface water runoff, contaminated water, or improperly disposed waste to reach an uncontaminated aquifer.

The Minnesota Department of Health has a brochure titled *Sealing Unused Wells*, where the information for this article was obtained. This brochure includes information on what the law requires, safety hazards, what an old well might look like and how to seal wells. Copies of this brochure are available at City Hall, free of charge.