

Sealing Unused Wells:

A well that is not in use, or sometimes referred to as an “abandoned” well, can be a potential threat to health, safety and the environment. Abandoned wells need to be sealed by a licensed well contractor. Sealing is the process of clearing an unused well of debris and filling the well with a special material called grout.

Unused wells that have not been properly sealed can be a source of groundwater contamination, potentially affecting nearby drinking water wells. They may threaten the quality of the water in city water wells, your neighbor’s well, or even your own well. Groundwater is the main source of drinking water for three out of every four Minnesotans. Protecting groundwater is everybody’s business.

As wells age the casing may rust, joints may leak, the pump may become stuck in the well, or the well may fill with debris. If the well is covered with loose boards or concrete, the cover may eventually decay or break open. Surface water runoff, debris and other contaminants can then enter the well.

A well may be taken out of service for a variety of reasons. It may no longer provide enough water. It may not have been repaired when it needed to be. It may have been contaminated. A well may be “lost” or abandoned when property changes hands or when use of the land changes from agricultural to industrial or residential. Old, unused wells are easily forgotten.

(Information obtained from MDH brochure, “Sealing Unused Wells”)