

ABANDONED WELLS AND INACTIVE WELLS

JANUARY 2018

Improperly abandoned or maintained wells can transmit contaminants from the surface into groundwater and can also be a safety hazard. This handout provides information about the destruction of abandoned wells and maintenance of inactive wells.

ABANDONED WELL

A well is considered abandoned (or permanently inactive) if it has not been used for over one year and there is no intention to use the well again. All abandoned wells must be properly destroyed consistent with state law and county ordinances within a reasonable timeframe.

ABANDONED WELL DESTRUCTION

Abandoned wells must be properly destroyed to protect groundwater from surface and subsurface contaminants and to eliminate potential physical hazards. Well destruction consists of the complete filling of the well according to state law and county ordinance. Contact your local county health department to determine what procedures and permitting are required. Generally, destruction of abandoned wells includes the following:

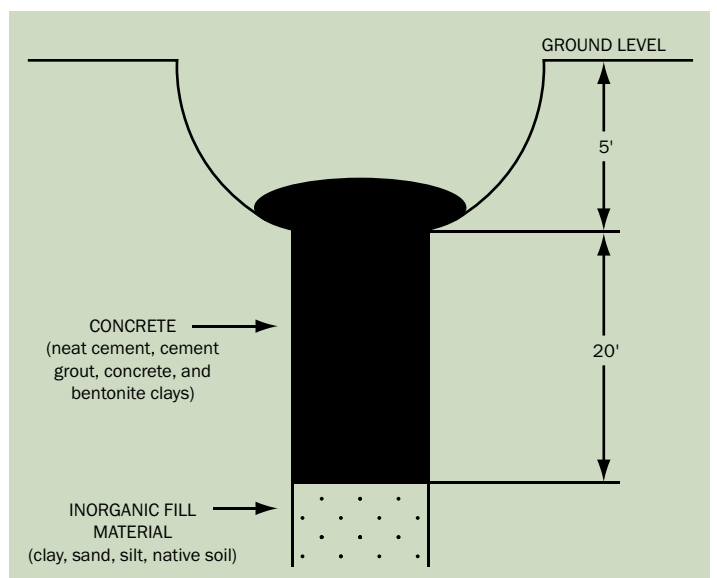
- An investigation to determine well condition, details of construction, and whether there are obstructions that will interfere with the process of filling and sealing. This may include the use of downhole video and/or photography for visual inspection of the well. Obstructions must be cleared, and if undesirable materials are found, then the county agency should be notified as soon as possible.
- Complete filling and sealing with proper materials and procedures dependent on the site conditions of the well. In most cases, the upper 20 feet of the well must be sealed with suitable sealing material and the remainder of the well must be filled with a suitable fill material.

INACTIVE WELL

A well is considered inactive if the owner demonstrates an intention for future use and the requirements for well maintenance are met.



OPEN WELL CASING. Improperly abandoned wells can transmit contaminants from the surface into groundwater and can also be a safety hazard to people and animals. This open well casing is an example of an abandoned well that has not been properly filled and sealed. Source: Groundwater Resources Association of California: <http://cart.grac.org/Abandoned-Wells-1?search=Abandoned%20Wells>.



EXAMPLE CROSS SECTION OF A FILLED AND SEALED WELL. For specific well abandonment requirements in your area, please contact your local agency. Source: cross section recreated from the Tulare County Environmental Health Department guidance on well abandonment (<https://tularecountyeh.org/eh/index.cfm/guidance-library/water-wells/well-destruction-procedures/>).

INACTIVE WELL MAINTENANCE

Proper inactive well maintenance includes:

- Preventing impairment of water quality within the well and groundwater encountered by the well.
- Installing a well cover secured by a lock or other means to prevent unauthorized access. The cover must be watertight if the well is inactive for more than five consecutive years or it is below known levels of flooding. A pump or motor, angle drive, or other surface feature of a well, may be considered the cover if it is watertight.
- Marking the well so that it is easily visible, located and identified as a well.
- Maintaining the area surrounding the well clear of brush, debris, and waste materials.

If a pump has been temporarily removed for repair or replacement, the well shall not be considered abandoned if the above conditions are met. The well shall be adequately covered to prevent a safety hazard and the entrance of foreign material, surface water, or contaminants into the well during the pump repair period.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information, please refer to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) published standards in Bulletin 74 (<http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/wells/standards.cfm>) for well construction and abandonment. Local environmental health agencies are responsible for implementing standards that meet or exceed DWR standards. The following local agencies are responsible for well abandonment and permitting within the Southern San Joaquin Valley. For specific well construction and abandonment requirements in your area, please contact your local agency.

Fresno County

(Unincorporated areas only.)
Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division
1221 Fulton Mall
Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 600-3357
<http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/public-health/environmental-health/water-surveillance-program/water-well-permitting-program>

Kern County

Public Health Department, Environmental Health Programs
2700 M Street, Suite 300
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Phone: (661) 862-8700
<http://kernpublichealth.com/water/water-wells-small-water-systems/>

Kings County

(All areas except the City of Hanford, City of Lemoore, City of Avenal, and NAS Lemoore.)
Community Development Agency
1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Building 6
Hanford, CA 93230
Phone: (559) 852-2670
<https://www.countyofkings.com/home/showdocument?id=3100>

Tulare County

Environmental Health Services Division
5957 South Mooney Boulevard, Second Floor
Visalia, CA 93277
Phone: (559) 624-7416
<https://tularecountyeh.org/eh/index.cfm/our-services/water-wells/>



CONTACTS

Casey Creamer
SSJV MPEP Coordinator
KRWCA
559-237-5567 ext 105

Andrea Schmid
Assistant Program Manager
PlanTierra, LLC
916-662-1163

SSJV MPEP COMMITTEE COALITIONS

Buena Vista Coalition
Cawelo Water District Coalition
Kaweah Basin Water Quality Association
Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority
Kings River Watershed Coalition Authority
Tule Basin Water Quality Coalition
Westside Water Quality Coalition

Please visit <http://agmpep.com>
for more information.



USDA NRCS CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT

The production of this brochure was funded by a USDA
NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant.