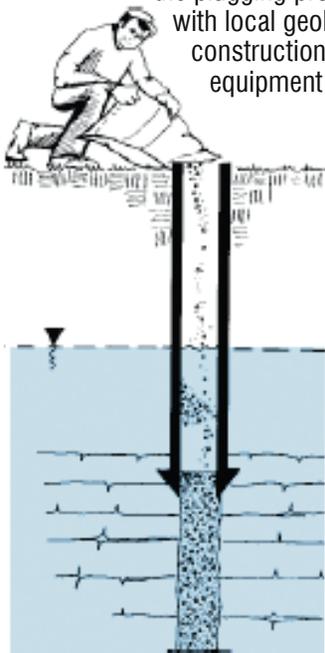


# Well Abandonment Procedures

Well abandonment procedures can be easy or difficult, depending on the well site and construction. If you have any questions regarding your particular situation, call a licensed well driller for advice **before** you begin the plugging procedure. Drillers are familiar with local geology and various types of well construction. They also have the special equipment sometimes required.



**REMEMBER: Wells abandoned after December 31, 1987 MUST be plugged by a licensed driller.**

## Additional Information

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402 W. Washington St., Room W264  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
(317) 232-4160  
(877) 928-3755  
water\_inquiry@dnr.state.in.us  
www.IN.gov/dnr/water

**Indiana Ground Water Association**  
7915 S. Emerson Avenue, Suite 132  
Indianapolis, IN 46237-9708  
(317) 889-2382

**Indiana State NRCS Office**  
6013 Lakeside Boulevard  
Indianapolis, IN 46278-2933  
(317) 290-3200  
[http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/field\\_offices.html](http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/field_offices.html)

**County Health Department**

**County Purdue University Extension Offices**  
(765) 494-8489  
<http://www.ag.purdue.edu/extension/Pages/default.aspx>

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# PLUGGING ABANDONED WELLS:

## A Landowner's Guide – Indiana Administrative Code, 312 IAC 13, Rule 10

# The Problem

Photo by Toby Deays

Old, unused water wells dotting the Indiana landscape may take different forms—a ramshackle windmill, a pit near an abandoned farmhouse, or a pump standing in a field. Like those before them, most rural residents still depend on ground water for their drinking water. Abandoned wells pose a potentially serious threat to the quality of ground water.

It is interesting to note that ground water is naturally protected by the filtering effect of soil. Unfortunately, abandoned wells act like a pipe connecting ground water to the soil surface. Surface runoff—that may be contaminated with sediment, bacteria or chemicals—can enter ground water directly by moving down a well, or along the outside of an grouted well casing.



Photo by Toby Deays

Abandoned wells are also a safety hazard for children and animals. A small child can easily fall into a large-diameter well, or even slip into a ten-inch wide hole.



**You can eliminate health and safety risks by plugging the abandoned wells on your property.**

## What is an abandoned Water Well?

A water well is considered abandoned if:

- The original purpose and use of the well have been discontinued for more than five years.
- The well is in such a state of disrepair that using it to obtain groundwater is impractical or a health hazard.

## Indiana Regulations

**The state of Indiana has laws declaring that landowners are responsible for the abandoned wells on their property.** The 1988 Indiana water well drilling statute (IC 25-39) requires abandoned wells to be sealed at the surface or plugged with impervious materials. Details of the actions that must be taken to plug or seal wells are based upon the date the well was abandoned.

### Wells abandoned before 1988

Wells abandoned **prior to January 1, 1988** must be sealed at or above the ground surface with a welded, threaded, or mechanically attached watertight cap. Wells that pose a hazard to human health must also be plugged according to the procedures detailed in the regulations.

Note that the law requires sealing or capping *as a minimum procedure* to prevent ground water contamination. **The IDNR Division of Water**

**strongly recommends plugging all wells abandoned before 1988** to protect ground water supplies. Many old wells were constructed without grout between the casing (the vertical pipe that lines the well) and the wall of the borehole. Sealing wells does not prevent contaminated water from running down the sides of the casing and entering wells through holes caused by corrosion or tears in the casing. Sealing also does not prevent contaminants that have seeped through the soil from entering wells through holes in the casing below the ground surface.

**Plugging wells with an impervious material is the best way to prevent contamination and restore the integrity of the geologic formation.** A landowner or a licensed well driller can do the work.

### Wells abandoned after 1988

Wells abandoned **after December 31, 1987** must be plugged with an impervious grouting material within one year of abandonment. **A licensed water well driller must do the work.** In addition, wells drilled after December 31, 1987, **not** equipped with a casing, must be plugged by the driller within 72 hours of completion.

### Large Diameter Wells

Large-diameter hand-dug or bucket excavated wells must be covered at the surface with a reinforced concrete slab or a treated wood cover protected by waterrepelling material such as roofing. The Division of Water recommends that the well also be completely filled with clean earth and impervious grouting materials as specified in 312 IAC 13.

### Funding Assistance

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides a payment of \$188 for the incurred costs of Well Decommissioning on farmsteads. Ask your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) about the EQIP practice code 351. Some County SWCDs, Watershed groups and Health Departments also have cost-share programs to assist landowners with properly abandoning a well.

