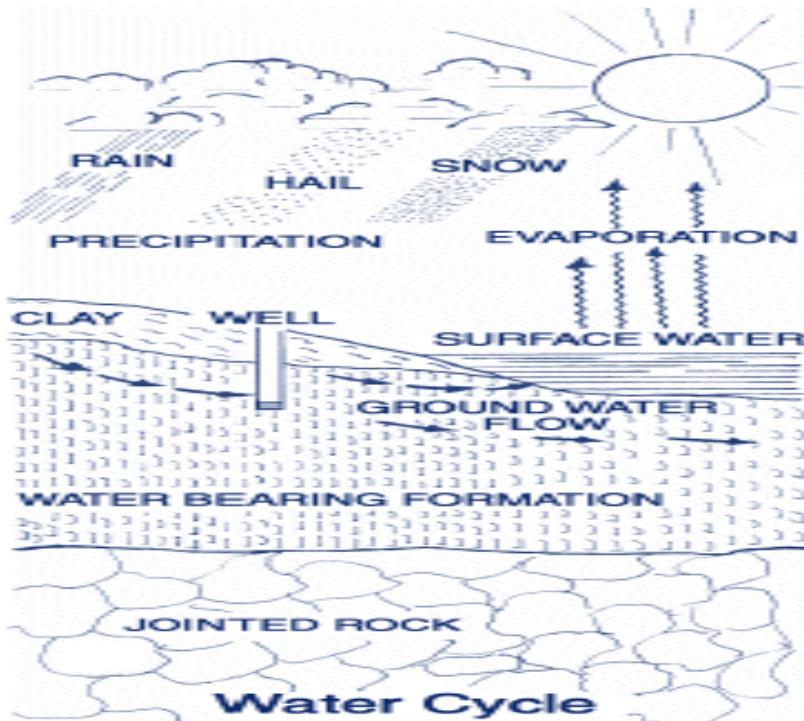


Abandoned Wells: A Hazard to Drinking Water



Clean and pure water is taken for granted in our society. We turn on the faucet and out comes fresh water. But the water that comes from the ground we live on can be unknowingly contaminated by those who own private wells. Private water wells that are no longer in use are considered abandoned and are a potential hazard to everyone.

Where Does the Groundwater Supply Come From



Groundwater comes from the hydrologic cycle. Part of the hydrologic cycle involves water from precipitation soaking into and being filtered by the soil as it moves to an area where it is stored (an aquifer).

Water in an aquifer is located in spaces between particles of sand, gravel, soil, and rock as well as in the cracks and channels of relatively solid rock.

What is an Abandoned Well

A water well is a hole, usually vertical, drilled into an aquifer to bring water in the ground to the surface.

An abandoned well is any water well that is no longer used to supply water or is in such a state of disrepair that the well has the potential for transmitting contaminants into an aquifer or otherwise threatens the public health or safety.

A Potential Polluter



Abandoned wells are a hazard to the water we all drink. If a well is left unsealed, the natural underground aquifer can become polluted. If the shaft of the well is left open or the well casing cracks and deteriorates, pollutants such as sewage, pesticides, fertilizers, organic or other hazardous materials can seep into underground water making it harmful to drink.

Pollution is difficult to detect, difficult to control and may last for years. The water for everyone in the surrounding area, whether from public or private wells, can become contaminated.

Underground water is constantly moving. It flows through pores in the soil and through cracks and crevices in the rock. As water moves, it picks up pollutants with which it comes in contact.



Concerns about pollution are particularly important for people who use water from private wells. Private wells are rarely disinfected, so it is essential that the underground water remains clean and safe.

An abandoned well can be a hazard even for those who use municipal water. Pollutants such as pesticides, fertilizers, and organic chemicals are extremely difficult to remove from municipal water supplies and can be dangerous if ingested through drinking water.

What is Required?

Both the laws of the State of Illinois and of DuPage County require that abandoned wells be properly sealed within 30 days of connection to a public water supply or notification from the health department. A well sealing application along with the permit fee per well, payable to the DuPage County Health Department, must be paid prior to scheduling the sealing. The average cost of sealing the well varies depending on well construction and location. We suggest that you contact several licensed water well contractors for estimates prior to hiring one to seal the well. When the well is sealed, the driller must send an affidavit (water well sealing form) to the DuPage County Health Department saying the work has been completed.

Another means of correction is to place the well back into service. If the municipality you live in allows the continued use of the well it may be possible to continue using it as a supplemental well.

To report an abandoned well or for more information regarding sealing a well or information on supplemental wells, please contact the Health Department.