

Wellhead Protection and Well Decommissioning

A wellhead is the physical structure of a well above the ground. Wellhead protection is the protection of the area surrounding the wellhead from contaminants that are likely to move toward or reach the well.



Protect and maintain your well, to help protect water quality.

Principles of wellhead protection

There are several basic principles of wellhead protection to follow to prevent the contamination of your well and the wells in your area:

- Well location
- Well construction
- Keeping contaminants away from wells
- Backflow prevention
- Sealing and properly decommissioning abandoned/unused wells
- Testing water quality and well performance



Risks

Pollutants spilled or seeping from a point source can enter the ground and eventually make their way into a well. The presence of pollutants risks contaminating the well water and aquifer source. Pollutants can include:

- Septic tanks
- Fertilizers and pesticides
- Chemical storage in houses, sheds, institutions, farms, and industries
- Road salt
- Accidental spill of hazardous materials
- Animal manure and wastes
- Fuel storage
- Insects, vermin, snakes entering well due to poor well caps
- Others – such as compost or brush piles and garbage boxes

Abandoned Wells

How can I recognize an abandoned well on my property?

Sometimes, abandoned wells are not easy to identify. Look for these clues:

- Pipe sticking out of the ground.
- Small building that may have been a former well house.
- Depressions in the ground.
- Presence of a concrete pit covered by lumber or metal.
- Presence of old windmills and windpumps.
- Additions to a home that may be constructed over a well to protect it from freezing.

How do I care for my well?

- Most rural landowners rely on groundwater from dug or drilled wells for their private water supply. If you own a well, you are responsible for it. You must make sure it is constructed to provincial standards. You must also arrange to have your water tested regularly. Your health and the health of your family and neighbours is dependent on clean, safe water.



Use a licenced contractor to properly decommission your unused well.

Why must I decommission my abandoned well?

- Wells that are older, and wells that have not been maintained properly, are direct pathways to groundwater or aquifers, and pose a direct risk to your drinking water supply and the health of you and your family.
- Abandoned or improperly decommissioned wells can also increase the risk of contamination entering nearby wells and provide a shortcut for contaminants to reach the groundwater, beneath our feet, in aquifers.

Did you know?

The Huron Clean Water Project offers funding to support your wellhead protection and well decommissioning projects. See contact information below to find out more.



Call us at **519-235-2610** or **519-335-3557** or visit our websites to find out more:
HuronCleanWaterProject.ca • abca.ca • mvca.on.ca