# Hazards Associated with Abandoned Wells

### ❶ *Contamination of Groundwater*

The importance of maintaining the integrity and serviceability of wells and pumps is critical to protecting groundwater as a top-level resource in California.

Improperly maintained wells may allow flood waters and/or surface contaminants such as fertilizers, pesticides, sewage, coliform bacteria, fuels, hazardous materials, or other wastes to pollute groundwater resources.

### ❷ *Dangerous to People and Animals*

Wells that have been improperly abandoned or fallen into an unsafe condition pose a threat to public health, safety and the environment.

Some larger diameter wells, including hand-dug wells, may become traps for people and livestock or collect trash, debris, and additional contaminants.

## How can I help?

*Anyone with knowledge of an abandoned well can report it anytime.*

The public is urged to notify EMD of suspected abandoned wells so we can quickly address immediate risks and dangers that may be present. A neglected abandoned well is a liability for a property owner.

**Q:** *May I remain anonymous?*

**A:** **Yes.** One does not need to give their name and we will honor requests for anonymity. However, it may be helpful if a phone number is given so an EMD specialist can contact the reporting party for additional details to help eliminate any immediate hazards.

## Contact Information

To report an abandoned well or for more information regarding abandoned wells, contact:

### Sacramento County

**Environmental Management Department**

**(916) 875-8532**

or send an Email to:

**EMD-abndwells@saccounty.net**

## If you have an emergency related to a well, call 9-1-1.

For well permitting construction, inactivation or destruction or for general questions:

**Call (916) 875-8400**

Further Abandoned Well Program information is available on the internet:

http://inside.emd.saccounty.net/

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

# DANGERS OF ABANDONED WELLS


**Environmental Management Department**

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# Background

In 2009, the Environmental Management Department received funding to directly support a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP). Abandoned wells have been documented as posing a hazard to public health, safety, and the environment. The SEP is being utilized to assess and identify existing abandoned wells in the County.

EMD enforces regulations governing abandoned wells that can be referenced under the following sections of Sacramento County Code:

- Sacramento County Code 6.28; "Wells & Pumps"
- 6.28.010.K. "Nuisance"
- 6.28.010.P.1. "Abandoned Well"
- 6.28.020 "Acts Prohibited"
- 6.28.030.E.4. "Permits - Permit Conditions - Abandoned Wells"
- 6.28.040.B.2. "Destruction of Wells - Definition of Abandoned Well"
- 6.28.040.B.3.a. "Destruction of Wells - General requirements"

## What does the program apply to?

The Abandoned Wells Program applies to anyone and any property or location that has an abandoned well or has knowledge of an abandoned well.

Identifying abandoned wells is often difficult and time consuming. Therefore it is important to be able to recognize wells and their surrounding structures.

## Here are some examples:

### Electrical Service Pole

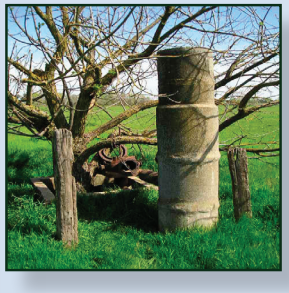
Typically found near an existing well, its function is to provide power to the pump motor associated with the well.

### Disconnected Electrical Service

Electrical equipment such as a meter, wiring or pump motor may be disconnected or removed.

## What is an Abandoned Well?

**An abandoned well is a well that is inoperable or has not been maintained for use for a period of a year or longer.**



### Concrete Stand Pipe(s)

Are often found near an existing well, and are part of an irrigation system.

### Open Casing

Is an unsealed opening to an existing well, which may serve as a conduit for contaminants to pollute groundwater.

### Hand-Dug Well

Sometimes covered by debris, hand-dug wells can be an immediate threat to people and animals as a 'falling in hazard,' and can be a contributor to contaminating the groundwater supply.

### Open Piping

Similar to an open casing, a well that does not have a check or gate valve to prevent backflow through connected piping- provides a direct conduit for pollutants to reach groundwater.