CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
5550 VENTURE DRIVE
PARMA, 01110 44130
TERRENCE M. ALLAN, R.S., M.P.H. PHONE. (216)201-2020
HEALTH COM M SSION ER FAX: (216)676-1317

PROPER PRIVATE WATER SYSTEM ABANDONMENT

WHY SHOULD UNUSED WELLS BE PROPERLY ABANDONED?

There are many reasons why an unused well should be properly scaled and abandoned. An unused well, which is not properly sealed, can pose a safety hazard. Even a small diameter drilled well could pose a threat to animals and humans.

The prevention of ground water contamination is another reason for proper well abandonment. Four ways that an unsealed or improperly abandoned well could contaminate ground water are: intermixing of waters between aquifers, by surface water entering the aquifer, by direct disposal of contaminants down the well, and by bacterial contamination form decomposition of animal bodies and waste products.

WHAT ARE THE PROPER METHODS TO SEAL AN UNUSED WELL?

Grout is the proper material to use when abandoning a well. Grout is a fluid mixture of water and cement or water and bentonite that is of a consistency to be pumped through a small diameter pipe. Before a well is sealed with grout, the following steps must be taken:

1. Remove the casing if possible. If the casing cannot be removed, slotting the casing or splitting the entire length is recommended.
2. The casing, if not entirely removed, should be cut off at least three to five feet below grade and removed.
3. Remove all pumps, screens, tools, fittings, pipe, etc.from the well.

In the case of a dug well, loosely laid stone, bricks, etc., must be removed to a depth of at least three feet below grade. In some instances, clean clay can be used in conjunction with grout to seal dug wells.

Contact the Cuyahoga County Board of Health or an Ohio Department of Health registered private water system contractor for more information.

WHAT ARE THE PRIVATE WATER SYSTEM SEALING REQUIREMENTS?

Ohio Private Water Rules require that a well taken out of service be properly sealed. This typically occurs when connecting to a public water supply. An exception to this requirement is that the well can be kept if the homeowner can demonstrate to the local health department that the well is properly constructed and will not create a public health nuisance. Wells left in service after a residence has connected to the municipal supply may be subject to the back flow prevention requirements of the local water department.

WHO SHOULD PERFORM PROPER PRIVATE WATER SYSTEM ABANDONMENT?

Based on the difficulty in sealing many wells and the equipment and knowledge required, it is recommended that well sealing be performed by a private water system contractor registered with the Ohio Department of Health. However, homeowners can properly abandon their own private water supply. Ohio Administrative Rules have established procedures for sealing all private water systems. All cisterns and hauled water storage tank shall be emptied of all accumulated water. All entrances and drains into the cistern or hauled water storage tank shall be disconnected and sealed. The cistern or hauled water storage tank shall be completely filled with an inert solid material to prevent collapse.

WHO MUST BE NOTIFIED WHEN AN ABANDONED WELL IS SEALED?

A well sealing report must be submitted to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Water. An appropriate form can be requested from the ODNR at (614)265-6739. Ohio Private Water System Rules require that a permit be obtained from the local health department prior to sealing a private water system. The permit fee is $50.00 for single family dwellings and $60.00 for multi-family dwellings, which includes an inspection to verify that the private water system has been properly sealed.