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# Private Well Policy

## Residential, Industrial, Commercial, and Irrigation Water-Supply Wells

### Purpose

To provide guidance for investigating and addressing existing private water-supply wells in accordance with Minnesota statutes and rules, and in support of the City's Wellhead Protection Plan. Statewide regulation of wells in Minnesota started on July 15, 1974, the effective date of what is now Minnesota Rules, chapter 4725.

Unused water-supply wells that are not properly sealed pose safety, health, and environmental threats to the community and to the environment. They are also a potential liability to the property owner. Groundwater is the drinking water source for most residents and businesses in the City. Private well owners are encouraged to properly manage their private wells in order to reduce the risk that they may cause contamination of the City's drinking water supply source. State law requires that inactive wells that have not been permanently sealed must be either repaired and put back into use, be permanently sealed by a licensed well contractor, or be issued an annual well maintenance permit from the Minnesota Department of Health.

### Scope

The policy applies to any development that would impact a private well, most commonly involving demolition, remodel, or addition projects. Properties with known private wells, and those where evidence doesn't rule out the potential for a private well, should adhere. The policy does not apply to properties where a well sealing record exists or where it has been determined that no well exists. A map showing where documented private wells are known to exist in the City is available on the City's [Groundwater Wells interactive map](#).

### Requirements

1. Determine the location of the well. See the 'Guidance for Locating a Well' section of this document.
2. Permit applicant is responsible for addressing the well in accordance with Minnesota statutes and rules, enforceable by the Minnesota Department of Health. Actions may include;
  - Having the well properly sealed by a licensed well contractor.
  - Applying for and obtaining a Well Maintenance Permit from the Minnesota Department of Health.
  - Applying for and obtaining a variance agreement for a lost, obstructed, or inaccessible well from the Minnesota Department of Health if a well cannot be located or sealed.

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#### ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT



- Continuing use of a well that is already in use unless the well is contaminating the groundwater or has the potential to cause health problems.
3. Submit the following documentation to the City:
- A. For a potential, unconfirmed, well
    - Documentation from a licensed well contractor and/or Minnesota Department of Health inspection staff indicating an inspection was performed and no well was located onsite.
  - B. For an unused well
    - Well sealing record, furnished by licensed well contractor.
    - Maintenance permit from the Minnesota Department of Health.
    - Variance agreement with the Minnesota Department of Health, filed with Hennepin County if a well cannot be located or properly sealed.
  - C. For a well in-use
    - Statement declaring the well is being properly maintained and use is to continue. Minnesota laws do not require a well that is in use to be sealed unless the well is contaminating the groundwater or has the potential to cause health problems. Active wells should be regularly tested in accordance with the [recommendations](#) of the Minnesota Department of Health.

## Guidance for Locating a Well

- Inspect the property.

Within the home look for:

- Glass block or concrete patch in an exterior step.
- Wells are often housed in a small room in the basement, many times under exterior concrete steps.
- 1 ¼ - 6 inch diameter pipe sticking up out of the floor in the basement or basement offset, well pit, or a concrete patch in the floor where the well was located.

On the property look for:

- Low spot or sunken area in the ground.
- Metal, wood, or concrete cover or manhole.
- Areas that stay wet can be caused by an unsealed flowing well.
- Windmill, an old shed or well house, or an old pump.
- Dug wells typically appear as a ring anywhere from 1 foot to several feet in diameter, made of concrete, tile, bricks, or rocks.
- Pipes 1-8 inches wide above, at, or below the surface (sewer lines may also have similar pipes).

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### ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT



- If the well cannot be located by the permit applicant, then a licensed well contractor and/or Minnesota Department of Health field staff must be enlisted to inspect the site with a magnetometer or metal detector. In some instances where a building will be demolished, inspection will be required prior to demolition, and if the well is not located, then a second inspection, after demolition and before redevelopment begins, may be required.
  
- Resources
  - The Minnesota Well Index, [www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/mwi](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/mwi)
  - Well Disclosure Certificate information, [www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures)
  - City, county, and state property records
  - Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) field staff (651-201-4600 or 800-383-9808)
  - Area well drillers. A list of licensed well contractors is available at [www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/lwc](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/lwc)

## Guidance for Sealing a Well

Minnesota law mandates that all well sealing work be done by a Minnesota licensed well contractor or licensed well sealing contractor. Once a well has been sealed, the licensed well contractor must file a Well and Boring Sealing Record with the Minnesota Department of Health - Well Management Section. Property/well owners may not seal their own wells. A list of licensed contractors in the area is available at [www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/lwc](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/lwc).

A Well Disclosure Certificate or Statement indicating that a well has been permanently sealed but which cannot be substantiated with an official corresponding Well and Boring Sealing Record will not be considered properly sealed.