

# Wells and Water information

## Online

For information on **wells or private drinking water**, visit our website: Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Well Management Program, [Wells and Borings](http://www.health.state.mn.us/wells) ([www.health.state.mn.us/wells](http://www.health.state.mn.us/wells)).

For resources or questions specific to **well sealing**, visit: [Sealing of Wells and Borings](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/sealing) ([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/sealing](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/sealing)).

## Email

Email the section directly at: [health.wells@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wells@state.mn.us)

## Who to Call

For an **area well specialist**, contact the MDH office nearest you. A map of offices can be found at [Contacting the Well Management Section](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/contactus) ([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/contactus](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/contactus)).

## MDH offices

**MAIN OFFICE**  
651-201-4600  
800-383-9808  
625 North Robert Street  
P. O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

**BEMIDJI**  
218-308-2100  
705 Fifth Street Northwest  
Bemidji, MN 56601

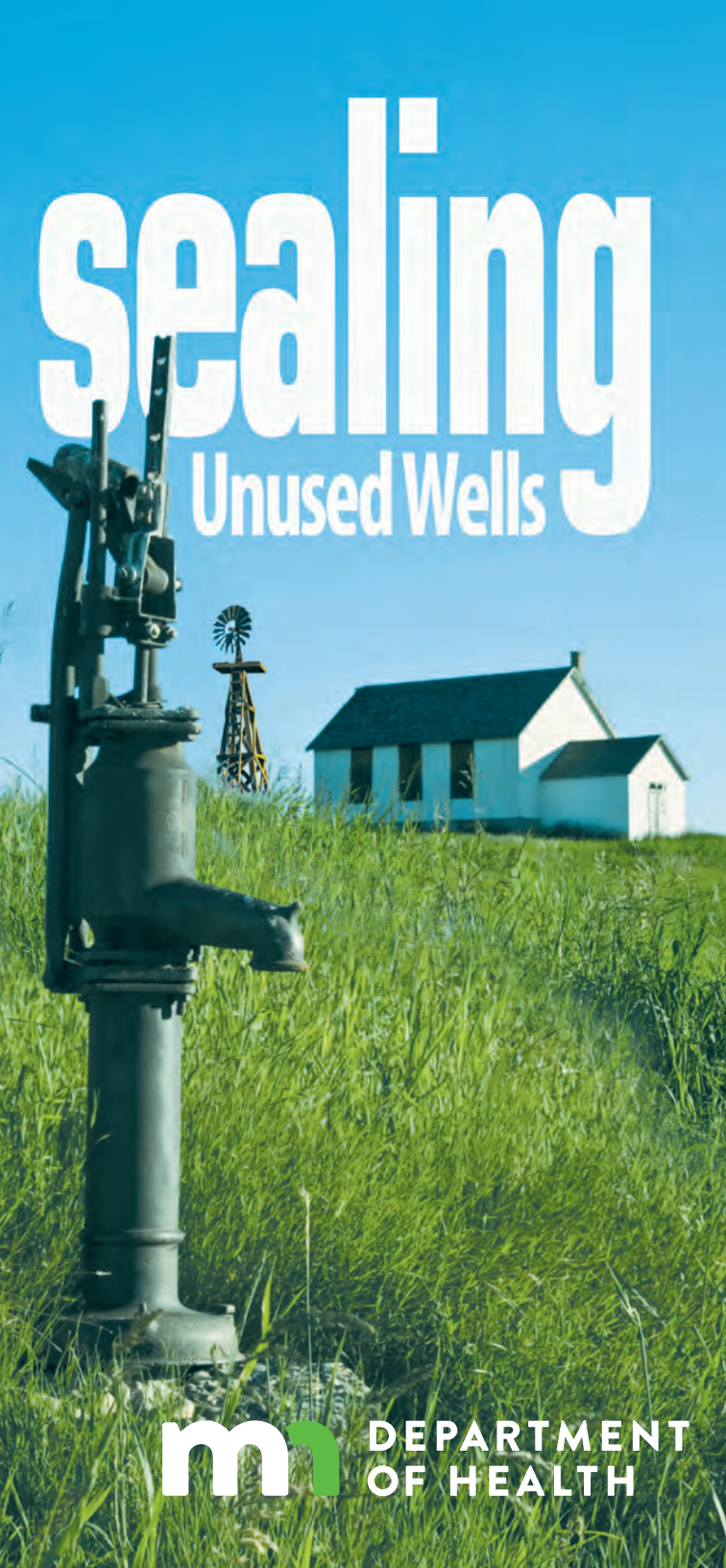
**DULUTH**  
218-302-6166  
Duluth Technology Village  
11 East Superior Street  
Duluth, MN 55802

**FERGUS FALLS**  
218-332-5150  
1505 Pebble Lake Road  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

**ST. CLOUD**  
320-223-7300  
Midtown Square  
3333 West Division Street  
St. Cloud, MN 56301

**MARSHALL**  
507-476-4220  
1400 East Lyon Street  
Marshall, MN 56258

**ROCHESTER**  
507-206-2700  
18 Wood Lake Drive Southeast  
Rochester, MN 55904



Wherever you live in Minnesota – northwoods, farm country, small town, or big city – you could have one or more wells on your property. A well may have been your home's main water source before city water became available, or it was installed to serve secondary buildings and barns, or used to water lawns or gardens.

## The reality is . . . wells do not last forever.

Wells are no longer used for a variety of reasons:

- Not enough water.
- Needed repairs.
- Became contaminated.
- Simply "lost" or abandoned when property changed hands.
- Land use changed.
- Connected to a community water system.

# Minnesota homeowners guide to sealing unused WELLS

Every unused well that is not properly sealed poses a **safety, health, and environmental threat to your family and community as well as a potential legal risk to the homeowner.**



## Physical Safety

Children and small animals can easily fall into an unprotected, open well. Also, accidents can occur when equipment is unsuspectingly driven over a crumbling well or well pit.



## Health & Environment

An unused well can act like a drain, allowing surface water runoff, contaminated water, or improperly disposed waste a direct pathway into drinking water sources. When this occurs, the quality of everyone's water is threatened – city water wells, neighbor's wells, even your current well. Therefore, it is recommended that homeowners test their water annually. For more information, visit:

[Owner's Guide to Wells](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/test.html)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/test.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/test.html)).



## Legal Responsibilities

Consider the responsibility and liability issues if an old well on your property is proved to be a conduit for contaminants that reach a drinking water source for neighbors or your city. Selling your property? You are required to provide a well disclosure statement to the buyer before a purchase agreement is signed. The statement indicates the location, number of wells, and if the well is being used or not. For well disclosure information, visit:

[What You Should Know About Wells at Property Transfer](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures/wellsatpropertytransfer.html)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures/wellsatpropertytransfer.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures/wellsatpropertytransfer.html)).



# How to find a WELL

## 1 Inspect Your Property

If your house was built before public water was available, the property may have one or more wells. Wells can be located either inside or outside a building.

### INDOORS 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



Pipe sticking up out of the floor in your basement, or a concrete patch in the floor where the well was located

### OUTDOORS 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 or several feet in diameter, made of concrete, tile, bricks, or rocks



Pipes 1 to 8 inches wide above, at, or below the surface may indicate a well (sewer lines or septic systems may also have similar pipes, investigate further if unsure)

## After locating the well, determine the WELL use

### Well in Use

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.



### Unused Well

If the well is not in use and does not have a [Water Well Maintenance Permit](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures/welldisclosure.html#mp) ([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures/welldisclosure.html#mp](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/disclosures/welldisclosure.html#mp)), or the well poses a threat to health or safety, Minnesota law requires that **you must have the well sealed.**

If your well appears to be filled or capped, but you learn it was improperly sealed, the homeowner is responsible to have the well properly sealed by an MDH licensed well contractor.



## What you need to know about sealing a WELL

### Contracting

The most important thing to know about sealing a well is that you cannot do it yourself. Minnesota law mandates that a well only be sealed by an MDH licensed well contractor.

For a list of licensed contractors in your area, visit: [Licensed Well and Boring Contractor Directory](http://www.health.state.mn.us/lwcsearch/) ([www.health.state.mn.us/lwcsearch/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/lwcsearch/)) or see the back page and call your nearest MDH office.

### Costs

The cost to seal a well can vary considerably. Access to the well, special geological conditions, debris in the well, depth and diameter of the well are all factors that can affect the cost of well sealing. Therefore, it is important to get several estimates to compare costs.

If a contractor is already on the site drilling a new well, the cost of sealing an old well can often be less. The same is true if a group of homeowners or a community get together and contract to have a number of wells sealed at the same time.

### Funding Assistance

Various grants and/or cost-share programs may be available through local or state government agencies. Low interest loans for well construction, repair, and sealing are also often offered through local lenders to homeowners that meet income and location requirements. Preapproval is often required to qualify for these grants or loans, so arrangements should be made before you contract to have the well sealed.

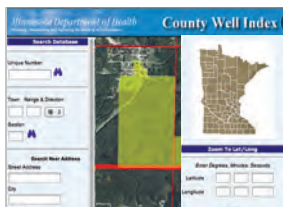
For more information, visit: [Sealing of Wells and Borings](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/sealing/) ([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/sealing/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/sealing/)).



### Recordkeeping

Once fully sealed, the contractor is required to submit a **Well and Boring Sealing Record** to MDH. You receive a copy of this record as well. Keep this record with your other property records. It documents the well is properly sealed.

## 2 Resources Online



The **Minnesota Well Index (MWI)** contains various information for many wells in Minnesota. To see what information is available for your well, visit: [Minnesota Well Index](http://www.health.state.mn.us/mwi/) ([www.health.state.mn.us/mwi/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/mwi/)).



A **Well Disclosure Certificate** contains information such as the location, number, and status of wells on the property. To see what information is available for your well, visit: [Well Disclosure Certificate Search](http://www.health.state.mn.us/wdlookup/) ([www.health.state.mn.us/wdlookup/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/wdlookup/)).

## 3 Other Resources



Old photos, former owners, or long-time area residents may know about windmills, houses, or buildings no longer present



City, township, county, and state **property records**



Area **well drillers**



Old fire insurance drawings at your local **historical society**